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Cyber-Campaigning for Congress: A Cultural Analysis of House Candidate Web Sites

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Cyber-Campaigning for Congress: A Cultural Analysis of House Candidate Web Sites

by

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated, first and foremost, to my husband, David. Throughout the research process, he never ceased to provide intelligent thoughts, constant encouragement, and an eager ear. There is no doubt that without his love and support, I could not have completed such a daunting task.

I would also like to express heartfelt thanks to my father and mother, Tom and Jo Earnhart, for their constant love and never-ending faith in me. No matter which paths I've chosen in life -- and there have been a few -- they have never once questioned my choices or my abilities. I am so very grateful to be their daughter.

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Cyber-Campaigning for Congress: A Cultural Analysis of House Candidate Web Sites

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Largely inspired by the evolution of political advertising over the last several years, this dissertation examines the rapidly changing relationship between campaign communication and the Internet. More specifically, the study explores, through a cultural lens, how politics and politicians are being packaged and presented on the World Wide Web at the dawn of the 21st century. Working under the assumption that Web sites function as part of an overall political campaign strategy, this research employs a series of thirteen in-depth interviews with political Web designers and a content analysis of 145 campaign sites (as well as a comparison of those sites to 118 legislative sites) to examine the online

advertising strategies of Congressional candidates, and their implications for political campaigns and public life in the United States.

Based upon the theory that campaign advertising, more than any other form of political communication, encourages important dialogue and interaction between candidates and their audiences, this study predicted that the campaign sites of U.S. House candidates would be superior to the official government sites of sitting Representatives in three key areas: information, creativity, and technology. Due to the competitive nature of campaigns, it was also expected that candidates' sites would feature more partisan content and more references to political opposition. Results of the present research indicate that while campaign sites included more technology, more partisan content, and more political opposition, legislative sites were slightly more informative and creative. Additionally, it was found that the sites of Republicans and incumbent candidates generally displayed higher frequencies in each category than those of Democrats and challengers.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Illustration 1.1: Former President Bill Clinton participates in a 1999 online town hall meeting at George Washington University.

Over the course of the last two hundred-plus years, the United States Congress has been through a number of social and technological changes, not the least of which concerns the introduction of the Internet. Today, congressional candidates and legislators alike are forced to grapple with online issues, and the arrival of the Internet and the World Wide Web has encouraged politicians to

reveal themselves in a way that other media have not -- a fact that has not gone unnoticed by those in politics, academics, the press, and the public.

According to King (2002, ¶ 8), "While Congress as an institution is unlikely to change fundamentally because of the Internet, congressional campaigns will never be the same." Adds Bernick (2002, p. 6), "Just about everyone has a Web site now: the Utah Jazz, Eddie Bauer, the *Deseret News*. And they've become a must-do for congressional candidates." And an adviser to Democratic congressional candidates warns, "My general advice is you have to have a Web site. You can't get away anymore with not having an Internet presence," (in Matthews, 2000, ¶ 9).

Whether or not the high expectations of King, Bernick, and others are met, while candidates of the past have relied on more traditional advertising to get their messages out to voters (Diamond and Bates 1988; Kaid 1981; Kaid and Davidson 1986), and while previous electoral successes have been largely dependent upon candidates' use of television (Paletz 1999), many believe that having a viable campaign Web site is a must-do for future political hopefuls.

While the success of John McCain's campaign site in raising money and recruiting volunteers during the 2000 presidential primary attracted a great deal of attention, observations as to whether candidates are currently using the Web to their political advantage are mixed. Some, like Jalonick (2000) and Mark (2002) find House candidates to be creative and technologically innovative on their sites;

others, such as Cornfield et al. (1998) and Tankersley (2002), claim that congressional candidates still have a long way to go in terms of using the Internet and the Web effectively.

Opinions as to how congressional candidates handle the Web *once they take office* are also wide-ranging. Some less positive observers side with Johnson (in Johnson et al. 2002, Conclusion section, ¶ 1), who notes, "Constituents are the most important stakeholders served by Congressional offices. This fact should be reflected on Congressional Web sites. To date, most congressional offices have applied the same principles to their Web sites as they have to more traditional forms of congressional communication, such as newsletters and mass mailings. But the traditional communications principles do not translate effectively to Web sites." Others, like King (2002, ¶ 16), are more optimistic. He states, "Some of the Web sites proliferating on Capitol Hill are surprisingly engaging. For example, Ohio Representative Dennis J. Kucinich's official site boasts audio clips of polka music...[And] Alabama Republican Representative Bob Riley e-mailed constituents a video greeting, inviting them to visit his site and to respond to an on-line survey." Differences in opinion aside, political Web sites are undoubtedly a growing area of research interest for both scholars and members of the media.

Current Research on Web Campaigning

Researchers in advertising, communication studies, and political science have long studied political messages disseminated through the mass media, and a significant amount of attention has focused on political advertising. While the bulk of the campaign advertising literature concerns televised political spots (see Benoit 1999; Joslyn 1980; Levine 1995), campaign Web sites are becoming a popular area of study as well (see Bimber 1998; Cornfield 2000; Foot and Schneider 2002). A review of the relevant literature, which is further discussed in Chapter Two, indicates that to date, academics, journalists, and others have primarily concentrated on six areas pertaining to politics and the Internet: campaigns, democracy, information seeking processes, technological innovation, communication, and content/design.

Study Purpose

This dissertation uses a cultural approach to examine the ways in which political candidates are being packaged and presented on the World Wide Web at the beginning of the 21st century, focusing on several important questions. Who exactly *is* the online congressional candidate? In what sort of culture is he or she

created? Do candidates give high priority to campaign Web sites? Will campaign sites be a priority in the future?

U.S. House elections were chosen because they are visible enough that most major party candidates post official campaign Web sites. It was also believed that upper-ballot political sites serve as a model for candidates running for office in lower levels of government. Moreover, unlike in U.S. Senate and presidential campaigns (though those will be mentioned as well), the U.S. House offers hundreds of Web sites from which to choose.

Based upon the theory that campaign advertising, more than any other form of political communication, encourages important dialogue and interaction between candidates and their audiences (see Hart 2000), this study predicted that the campaign sites of U.S. House candidates would be superior to the official government sites of sitting Representatives in three major areas: information, creativity, and technology. Due to the competitive nature of campaigns, it was also expected that the sites of candidates would feature more partisan content and more references to political opposition than those of legislators.

Data and Methods

Working under the assumption that Web sites function as part of an overall campaign strategy, this dissertation uses two distinct sources of data: a

series of thirteen in-depth interviews with political Web design elites, and a content analysis of 145 campaign sites (as well as a comparison of those sites to 118 legislative sites). The objectives of this approach are threefold: (1) to understand the culture in which campaign sites are created, (2) to determine how political candidates present themselves online; and (3) to discern the similarities and differences between the sites of congressional candidates and sitting House legislators.

Interviews

The interviews, discussed in greater detail in Chapters Three and Four, were conducted with experienced advertising creatives in major political Web design firms in the summer of 2002. The interviewees were selected using a three-stage process. First, consultants from a roster of established political Web design firms listed in a recent Campaigns & Elections (2001) article were contacted. To qualify, the consultants had to have several years' experience in the field, and had to have worked on one or more presidential or congressional campaigns during the past several election cycles. The Campaigns & Elections list yielded a total of *four* interviews. Next, six consultants whose company name had appeared on the homepages of some of the better-developed sites coded for the study were contacted, resulting in *two* additional interviews. The remaining designers were located through a Yahoo search primarily using the terms "political Web design,"

and "campaign Web site design." Through this process, interviews were secured with an additional *seven* designers.

Though the interviews were not rigidly constructed, the author did use an interview guide designed to address the study's five hypotheses. Sample questions included: What, in your opinion, is the most important function of a campaign site? Who does the day-to-day maintenance on the sites that you design? What would you say are the most common feature(s) requested by candidates?

Content Analysis

As is explained further in the Methodology, a total of 263 congressional Web sites were selected for the content analysis. The units of analyses were the official campaign homepage and the official U.S. House homepage. Each homepage was analyzed in full, regardless of length. Coding categories were based upon a prior congressional Web site coding scheme designed by Jarvis (1996). However, since Jarvis' research focused only on the sites of sitting legislators, the coding scheme was modified by the author to include variables specifically related to campaign sites.

In an attempt to increase reliability in the content analyses, three students from the University of Texas at Austin were selected as independent coders. The coders, trained extensively by the author, worked independently of one another,

each on different sections of the project. The issue of intercoder-reliability and further details about the duties of each coder are discussed in Chapter Three.

Organization of the Dissertation

This dissertation includes a total of seven chapters. Immediately following the Introduction, Chapter Two offers a brief history of the Internet as it relates to both politics and society. Next, a review of the germane literature on campaign Web sites is provided, along with an explanation of the cultural theory that grounds this research. A discussion of the relationship between congressional candidates, legislators, and the Web is subsequently offered, and the chapter concludes with the study's five hypotheses.

Chapter Three outlines the dissertation's methodology. The sample and procedure for both the interviews and the content analysis are explained in detail, and conceptual and operational definitions for the key terms measured in the study (i.e. information content, creative content, technological content, partisan content, and political opposition) are provided.

The fourth chapter focuses on the qualitative section of the project: the political Web designer interviews. In this chapter, numerous comments from the interviewees are provided, along with a discussion of the four primary findings that emerged from the interview notes and three additional areas of interest to the author.

The next two chapters concern the quantitative portion of the study: the content analysis. Chapter Five examines the discrepancies in the Web sites of candidates and legislators, while Chapter Six details the more notable differences between the two groups. Periodically, data from the two chapters is compared and contrasted with observations from the Web designers interviewed in Chapter Four.

Chapter Seven provides a summary, discussion, and analysis of the major findings from the study. Additionally, one of the most informative (both politically and non-politically), creative, and technologically innovative sites in the content analysis is described in detail and offered as a template for future candidates. Finally, the study's limitations, as well as several directions for future research on the topic of campaign Web sites, are offered.

Chapter 2: The World of Politics Meets the World Wide Web

Until recently, the media mix available for political campaigning included five components: television, radio, newspaper, telephones, and direct mail. Now, there is a sixth: the Internet. -- *Faucheux, F. (1998).* Campaigns & Elections*, 7.*

Congress has to decide whether to embrace the openness of the Internet. I think they have no choice — the American people are going to expect it. -- *Caldwell, F. (in Matthews 2001, ¶ 47). Federal Computer Week Web site.*

Any candidate worth his salt now adds an online component to his political holster of bumper stickers, yard signs, direct mail, advertising, grass-roots organizing, phone banks, fund-raisers and more. -- *Brack, A. (2001, ¶ 1).* Campaigns & Elections*, 17.*

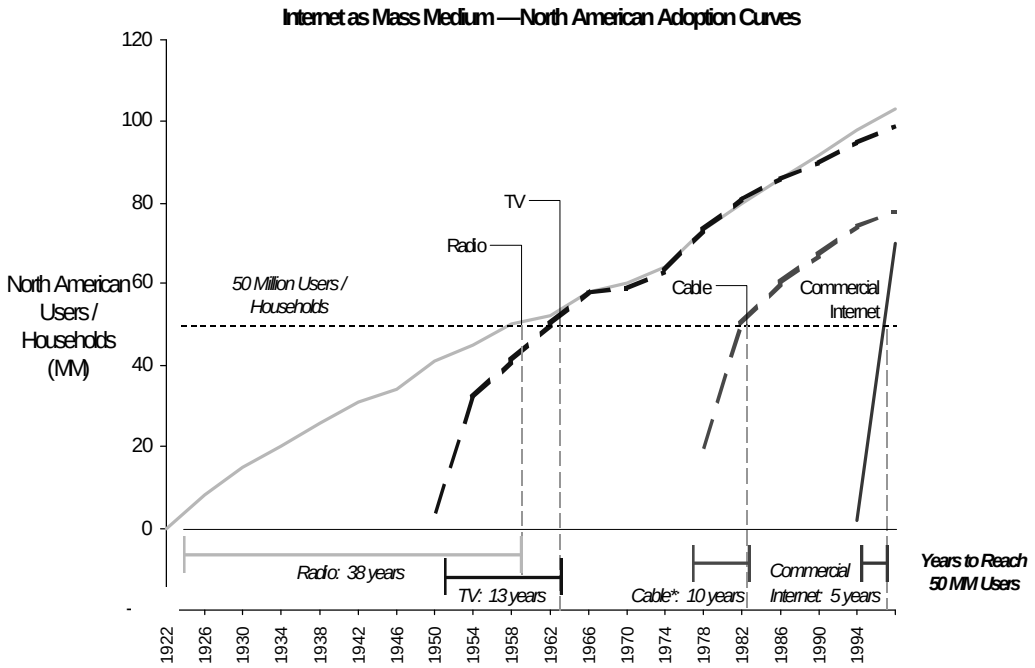
POLITICS ON THE WEB

Illustration 2.1: Former Senate Majority Leader and 1996 presidential candidate Robert Dole.

In April of 1995, longtime Senator and former Senate Majority Leader Robert Dole officially announced his intent to run for President of the United States. Shortly thereafter, in the midst of the first presidential race to take place since the Web had gained widespread popularity, the Dole campaign posted a Web site. To promote the site, in what one journalist called "the biggest advertisement in the history of the World Wide Web," Dole invited viewers of an October 1996 presidential debate to "...tap into my homepage:

www.dolekemp96org," (Moran 1996, p. A10). Though Dole, who once referred to his site "my whatchamacallit," fumbled the address by misplacing an all-important 'dot,' more than two million Web users accepted his invitation immediately following the debate. To many, this single act symbolizes the beginning of the Web's emerging role in American political campaigns (see Davis 1999).

The Internet is the fastest-growing electronic technology in world history; in a relatively short period of time, usage has reached record levels. For instance, while it took radio 38 years, television 13 years, and cable television 10 years, respectively, to reach 50 million U.S. households, the Internet reached the same amount of households in *less than five years* (Schroeder 2001; see Figure 2.1). Currently, more than 174 million people, or 55 percent of homes in the U.S., have Internet access; globally this figure tops 254 million. Additionally, over 55 million Americans are able to log onto the Internet from work (Pew Charitable Trusts 2002). As Pew Internet & American Life Project Director Lee Rainie notes, “The Internet has gone from novelty to utility for many Americans. They are beginning to take it for granted, but they can’t imagine life without it,” (Pew Charitable Trusts 2002, ¶ 3).



*Launch of HBO used to estimate the beginning of cable as an entertainment/advertising medium.
Graph source: Towson University http://www.towson.edu

Figure 2.1: Internet Adoption Rates Versus Other Mediums (Schroeder 2001).

This is not to say that the digital divide, defined as "those who have access to information tools and the capability of using information and those who presumably do not," (Compaine 2001, p. 1) has closed. In fact, though the issue is widely debated, there is evidence to suggest that a high percentage of citizens (particularly minorities and those with lower incomes and/or lower levels of education) are still cut off from the benefits of digital technology (see Cooper

2002). But the news is not all grim; according to Muske (2001, p. 2), "More people at every education level, for every race, among men and women, and for all ages are using the Internet." In fact, it appears that the traditional "have-nots" are making some of the most notable gains.

The quick evolution of any technology naturally raises questions about its potential advantages and disadvantages, and this is especially true of the Internet. The growth of the Internet and the Web has inspired a national dialogue in the media, among academics, and in public circles about issues that reach far beyond the digital divide. As the Dole anecdote and the quotes at the beginning of the chapter indicate, one popular area of discussion concerns the Internet's role in -- and influence upon -- politics. Just as the emergence of television changed and enriched the political landscape in the 1960s, many believe the Internet and the Web are "ushering in a new phase in political communication," (Gibson and Ward 2002, p. 99). Questions remain, however, regarding the significance of the medium as a political communication tool. What role will the Internet play in future political campaigns (Bimber 1997)? Will the Internet encourage democracy and participation (Norris 1999)? Is online voting a viable option (Browning 1996; Meeks 1997; Motluck 1997; Schorow 2002)?

The rise in levels of Internet access in the last few years suggests there is a substantial audience for Web-based politics, and numerous studies confirm that a majority of Americans see the Internet as an important source of political

information. One recent study found that although television is still the primary source for election news and campaign advertising, more Internet users than ever (22% in 2002 vs. 15% in 1998) are seeking online campaign information (Pew Research Center 2003)[1]. Another study found that of those who go online for election news, 43 percent claimed that the information they obtained on the Web actually affected their voting choices (Szuhaj and Ledger 2001).

The 2000 presidential primaries provided further evidence that Web sites may become indispensable to future political candidates. Not surprisingly, John McCain's 2000 presidential campaign site, which brought in more than $2.2 million (average donation: $112) and helped McCain recruit roughly 26,000 volunteers, garnered much media and public attention (Mintz 2000). As PoliticsOnline publisher Phil Noble stated in the early stages of the McCain race, "We are seeing the beginning of a defining moment of the Internet and politics. In 48 hours, a campaign raised a million bucks and signed up 10,000 volunteers...Imagine what will happen when people really start to pay attention," (White 2000, A08).

This technology, however, isn't just for candidates; the Internet is also bridging the gap between citizens and elected officials. For instance, in 2001, the U.S. Congress received more than 117 million e-mail messages, averaging almost 330,000 per day -- a 186 percent increase since 1999 (BBC 2002). Moreover,

[1] The Internet was a less important political resource than in 2000 (33%), largely because midterm

according to Browning et al. (2001), U.S. House sites logged roughly 500 million hits in 2001, and the top House sites received almost 3,000 unique visitors each month.

The growing popularity of political Web sites, and the ways in which the Internet and the Web can be used to enhance political communication, makes this topic a prime and pressing area for scholarly research. In fact, scholars from several disciplines, most notably advertising (see Kaid 2002), communication studies (see Hacker 2002), and political science (see Davis 1999) insist that the Internet *must* be studied as a political communication tool due to its increasing influence on democracy. As such, this seems the ideal time to examine how candidates and elected officials are being sold to citizens and the media via campaign and legislative Web sites.

At the outset, it is important to make a distinction between the Internet and the World Wide Web. Since these two terms have been used in different ways over the last several years and, in fact, are often used interchangeably, the author defers to the Oxford English Dictionary (OED) (1933; [1989]). The OED, designated "the dictionary of choice for etymological and historical information," by advertising researchers Stern, Zinkham, and Holbrook (2002), classifies the Internet as "a computer network consisting of or connecting a number of smaller networks, such as two or more local area networks connected by a shared

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elections draw less attention than presidential races.

communications protocol." Likewise, the World Wide Web is defined as "a system for accessing and retrieving multimedia information over the Internet, whereby documents stored at numerous locations worldwide are cross-referenced using hypertext links, which allow the user to move from one document to another." Put simply, the Web is the graphical portion of the Internet. While the mainstay of this dissertation focuses on the Web, other important aspects of the Internet are also taken into consideration.

Much discussion in recent years has centered on the relationship between politics and the Internet. While these studies have certainly proven valuable, most have been casual and subjective. A thorough review of the literature indicates that academic and popular attention has been largely devoted to six themes: campaigns, democracy, information-seeking, technological innovation, communication, and content/design.

Campaigns

While past U.S. political elections have neither been won nor lost because of a candidate's presence -- or lack of presence -- on the Internet, the use of Web sites as a tool for delivering political information continues to grow, and many observers predict that we will soon have "real Internet campaigns and real Internet

candidates," (see Schneider 2000, ¶ 2). Moreover, a number of high-profile politicians like Sen. John McCain, former president Bill Clinton, and former Vice-President Al Gore have already participated in "virtual" town hall meetings, question-and-answer sessions, and other innovative online campaign events.

Several researchers have examined the role of Web sites in political campaigns thus far. Some emphasize the process by which campaign sites bring together candidates and voters (Benson 1994; Davis 1999; Gibson and Ward 2002; Hacker, Howl and Steiner 1996; Jalonick 2002; Puopolo 2001; Selnow 1998; Weise 2000), while others focus on the future; that is, how the Internet might affect political campaigns, both positively and negatively, in the years to come (Hall 1999). The influence of the Internet on political candidates has also received attention (D'Alessio 2000; Fose 2002; Margolis et al. 1997; Stromer-Galley 2000), as has the impact of online campaign fundraising (Ireland and Nash 2001; Varoga 1999; Willis 1999).

Democracy

Another group of scholars focuses on the Internet's potential as an instrument of democracy. Some hopefuls, like Harvard professor Elaine Kamrack (as cited in Weise 2000, p. 38), see the ability for the immediate exchange of

political questions, answers, and ideas on the Internet as "real, meaningful democracy at work." Many praise the unmatched opportunities the Internet provides for citizens to engage in political actions such as attempting to influence votes and organizing interest groups (Bimber 1997; Bimber 1999; Budge 1996; Swanson 2000), while others believe the Internet's strength lies in the fact that it may force a more issue-based look at candidates' views (Aikens and Koch 1996). Still other cyber-optimists celebrate the medium's interactivity and twenty-four hour accessibility, the seemingly level playing field it creates among candidates, and its widespread appeal to younger voters (see DeLoach 1996). Conversely, some doubters are taking a "wait and see" approach, seeking evidence as to whether or not the Internet only serves to reinforce the already existing gap in political access and knowledge between the 'haves and have-nots' (Barber 1997; Dahlgren 2000; Norris 2001).

Information-Seeking (Citizens and Journalists)

An increasing number of Web users are surfing the Internet to gather news about politicians and political issues; as such, a number of academics have turned their attention to this topic. Many scholars, for instance, are exploring the ways *citizens* seek political information online. Some focus on the Internet's ability to

reach voters (Connell 1997; McKeown and Plowman 1999) or the ways in which site visitors interpret online political information (Beato 2000; Kern 1997). Other researchers raise concerns about online source accountability (Jacques and Ratzan 1997), and about the effects of the enormous amount of information available on campaign sites (Benoit and Benoit 2000; Klotz 1998; Schneider 2000). Largely, however, research in this area centers on comparing the political information found on the Web with that acquired through more traditional media outlets (Althaus and Tewksbury 2000; Eveland and Dunwoody 2001; Johnson et al. 1999; Kaid 2002; Leong et al. 1998; McKinney and Gaddie 2000; Novotny 2002).

Another group of academics focuses on how *journalists* regard online political sources. This is not surprising, since the press is a prime Web audience for politicians, and since journalists often use online information in their reporting. A number of observers study the issue of online journalistic source credibility (Austin and Dong 1994; Derbyshire 2002; Irvine 1997; Mauro 1995), while others explore how the Internet is changing the ways in which journalists gather facts for stories (Todorova 2002; Walker 2002) and how obtaining information from online sources affects their reporting (Koch 1998; Weise 2000). A large amount of research also focuses on the increasing frequency of Internet usage among members of the media (Connell 1998; Cornfield 2002; Szalavitz 1999) and reporters' growing reliance on Web sources (Hellinger 1998; Reider 1996).

Technological Innovation

A number of scholars are examining the numerous technological advancements associated with online politics. Some researchers examine the ways in which the Web is becoming increasingly information-rich and communication-intensive (Benson 1996; Bimber 2000), while others study issues related to the privacy of citizens on the Web (Borrus et al. 2001; Mehlman 2001; Wayne 2000). Online voting, an activity with an uncertain future at this point in time, is also a topic of notable concern, particularly among bureaucrats, academics, and advocacy groups (Gallop-Goodman 2001; Harrison 2000; Noble 1999; Petersen 2000).

Communication

Online political communication between citizens and site sponsors has also been a prevalent area of research over the past several years. Much attention has been paid to the sprawling grassroots activist groups on the Internet (Dongen 1996; Foot and Schneider 2002; Hill and Hughes 1998; Jones 1996), and to the political debate and participation that takes place among citizens in venues such as online billboards and chat rooms (Benson 1996; Bimber 1997; Bucy et al. 1999; Davis 1999). Likewise, the ability of election-oriented Web sites to

mobilize citizens is a prominent topic in the field of communication (Bimber 1998; Foot and Schneider 2002), as is the role the Internet will (or will not) play in relation to other political media (Browning 1996; Dicken-Garcia 1998; Gordon 1995; Schneider 2000; Shapiro 1998).

Content/Design

Finally, considerable interest has centered on the quality of the content and design of political Web sites, and of campaign sites in particular. While most observers fit into one of three groups -- satisfied, dissatisfied, or neutral -- all seem focused on whether or not the needs of citizens are being met by online politicians.

The first group is of the opinion that political Web sites are currently lacking in the areas of information, creativity, and/or technology (Bentley College 2002; Cornfield et al. 1998; Tankersley 2002) The second group takes a more positive tack, praising the sites of politicians who understand the Web and use it to effectively communicate with visitors through informative, attractive and innovative sites (Jalonick 2000; Mark 2002; Weise 2000). Finally, a cluster of more neutral observers refrains from judgment altogether and instead offers simple tips for Web site improvement (Browning et al. 2001; Connell 1998; Johnson et al. 2002; Schneider 2000; Yeatts 2000).

POLITICAL ADVERTISING ON THE WEB: A CULTURAL APPROACH

Cultural Theory

Most observers agree that the main purpose of advertising is to promote goods and services to consumers. However, ads not only sell products; they create a social world around these products and transmit messages through social connotations (Millum 1975). As Taylor, Hoy, and Haley (1996, p. 2) note, "Advertising is clearly a cultural phenomenon, culturally inspired and created within the expectations of a culture."

In meeting consumers' expectations, advertising attempts to draw on familiar images, to speak with readily understood social messages, and to project the goals and values of society. For instance, the September 11 terrorist attacks -- arguably the most culturally significant event of our time -- were represented in a number of television ads during the 2002 Super Bowl. While Monster.com featured former New York Mayor Rudy Giuliani, the Office of National Drug Control Policy aired two ads suggesting a connection between buying drugs and helping terrorists (Parpis 2002). And Anheuser-Busch's "Respect" spot, regarded by many in advertising as the best in the Super Bowl, showed the trademark Budweiser Clydesdales pulling a beer wagon into Manhattan where they appear to pause, bend a knee, and bow their heads near the area where the World Trade Center once stood.

Advertising scholars O'Guinn, Allen, and Semenik (2000, p. 157) define culture as "the total life ways of a people, the social legacy the individual acquires from his/her group," (see Figure 2.2). Advertising and culture share a significant relationship because, as McCracken (1986, p. 74) observes, advertising functions as a "potential method of meaning transfer by bringing the consumer good and a representation of the culturally constituted world together within the frame of a particular advertisement." McCracken (1986, p. 75) adds that agency creative directors "must choose from among alternatives that have been created by the network of cultural categories and principles that constitute a culture's world." Once an advertisement is presented, the viewer is left to determine whether or not it is culturally relevant and meaningful. More specifically, ads must be consistent with the values and beliefs of a people; if not, they, and the goods and services they represent, will likely be rejected. The framework from which this theory is drawn, McCracken's Model of Cultural Meaning Transfer, is discussed in more detail in Chapter Four.

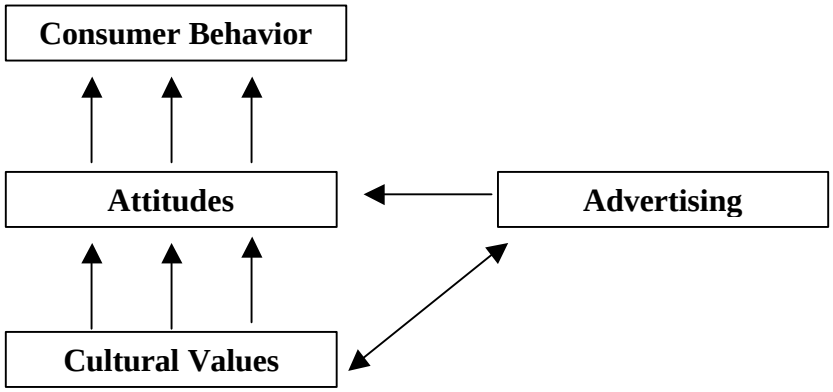

Figure 2.2: Cultural Values, Attitudes, and Consumer Behavior (O'Guinn et al. 2000).

Advertising from Ancient Greece to Modern-day America

Advertising has been around since the beginning of civilization. For example, early Greek, Roman, and Egyptian merchants hung signs displaying images of their goods. In medieval England, cobblers used a golden boot, bakers a bundle of wheat, and opticians a pair of glasses to identify their trades. And by the year 1400, priests, teachers, and other professionals were promoting their services on handbills -- a precursor to today's classified ads (Sivulka 1998). With the invention of the printing press and movable type, however, the age of advertising as an instrument of culture truly began. Since then, the development of mediums such as radio, television, and now the Internet, has furthered advertising's evolution and integration into society.

Much like manufacturers of soap, cereal, and other commercial goods, political candidates over the past half-century have come to rely on campaign ads to sell themselves and, ultimately, to buy the votes of citizens. Since the publication of Joe McGinniss' classic *The Selling of the President* (1968), considerable attention has been given to the ways in which politicians are packaged and peddled, Madison Avenue-style. According to political media strategist Roger Ailes, the only difference between selling a candidate and selling cookies is that "cookies don't get off the shelf and hold news conferences, or make gaffes, or go on *Meet the Press*," (in Simon 1998, p. 199). It has been said that former President Ronald Reagan was a master of this concept; in 1984, shortly after walking into an introductory meeting with his campaign re-election team, Reagan declared, "Hi guys! I'm a bar of soap," (Simon 1998, p. 199). And certainly, former president Bill Clinton was, and still is, an expert at selling his personae and policies to the public and the press.

Several academics have taken note of this phenomenon. Ehrenhalt (1992, p. 19) observes that congresspersons must convey a positive image in order to get elected, noting, "Even if it does not matter a great deal what a candidate says, it makes an enormous difference how he looks and sounds saying it." And Ansolabehere and Iyengar (1995, p. 1) add, "[In the mid-1960s] there arose a new class of campaign manager -- the media consultant, who typically had worked on Madison Avenue and viewed selling politics much like selling any other product."

However, while the strategies of candidates regarding more traditional forms of advertising (e.g. print, television, radio) have been adequately documented in the media and academics alike, we are only beginning to understand the ways in which they deal with the Internet and the Web.

Benefits of Using a Cultural Approach

With the work of Millum, McCracken, and other scholars in mind, this study uses a cultural approach in an effort to determine whether online political candidates, with the help of professional Web designers, are anticipating and meeting the needs of politically-interested citizens. This macro approach, which involves looking at campaign sites as instruments of cultural meaning, seems a good fit for political advertising for several reasons. First, it provides a rich, descriptive snapshot of how candidates are currently being sold to the American public. Second, it demonstrates how candidates are being presented on a young medium that is still in its infancy. Third, a cultural approach digs deeper than the largely casual analyses offered thus far, providing plentiful information about the past, present, and future of political advertising from which other researchers can build hypotheses. Finally, this method allows for external validity in that

observations gleaned from the study can be generalized beyond the data to other subjects or groups.

This topic at hand was chosen because it combines the author's interests in advertising and politics. As such, the study explores questions relevant to three fields: advertising, communication studies, and political science. The primary goal of this method is to bring together literatures guided by the earlier assumptions of cultural advertising scholars.

Several important studies have used a cultural approach in examining advertising in various mediums across time. The authors challenge us to look at what advertising has historically done to our culture, while at the same time asking us to place advertisements within the context of our larger human needs and social values. Much of this research is rooted in advertising theory, while the remainder is grounded in communication studies and political science. Following, a summary of several prominent studies drawn from these three areas is presented.

Advertising and Culture

A notable amount of cultural research has been conducted with respect to advertising creativity. Kover (1995, p. 607), in an approach he calls "similar to

that of an anthropologist," studied the culture of advertising copywriters and discovered through in-depth interviews that copywriters actually use informal theories of communication when developing creative strategies. Fox (1984), Jones (1992), and Weilbacher (1993) examined advertising creativity from a historical perspective, concluding that ads developed in the 1960s by industry giants such as Leo Burnett, David Ogilvy, and William Bernbach fostered a creative revolution that had all but vanished a decade later. Reid, King, and DeLorme (1998) surveyed top agency creatives to see whether they agreed that today's advertising is inferior, and found that the professionals, in fact, did *not* view modern ads as less creative than those from decades past.

Additionally, a number of cultural advertising studies have focused on gender portrayals in ads over time. For instance, Soley and Kurzbard (1986) performed a content analysis of males and females in general interest magazine ads from 1964 and 1984, discovering that female models were much more likely to be portrayed as suggestively clad, partially clad or nude than male models in both years. Soley and Reid (1988), who repeated the study to evaluate nudity content, found that magazine ads from 1984 included more nudity than those from 1964. Klassen, Jasper and Schwartz (1993) and Earnhart (1998) used content analysis to determine how men and women were depicted in magazine ads from the 1970s to the 1990s, finding that although equality portrayals increased, a

disproportionately high number of ads illustrated women in submissive or suggestive poses.

In two cultural advertising studies of a broader scope, Sivulka (1998) demonstrated how the newspaper ads of colonial times to the Web sites of today have matured in America, noting that ads and advertising agencies both mirror *and* create cultural trends and issues. On the other hand, Schudson (1984), who used this approach in his examination of the role that cigarette ads played in U.S. culture as smoking rose in popularity beginning in the 1920s, concluded that advertising generally serves as a *reinforcement* of cultural values rather than as a *catalyst*.

Communication Studies, Political Science and Culture

As was previously mentioned, researchers from the fields of communication studies and political science have also approached campaign advertising from a cultural perspective. For instance, in her acclaimed book Packaging the Presidency, Jamieson (1984) explored how presidential candidates in eleven campaigns from Eisenhower to Clinton were sold through a variety of media, and how these different types of media impacted the campaigns, the candidates, and the voting public.

Jamieson (1984, p. 519) concluded:

> In many ways televised political advertising is the direct descendant of the advertised messages carried in song and on banners, torches, bandanas, and broadsides. Ads continue to ally the candidate with the people, only now that takes the form of showing the candidate pressing the flesh or answering questions from groups of citizens.

Using a similar approach, Ballotti and Kaid (2000), Benoit (1999), Diamond and Bates (1992), and Levine (1995) also chronicled the history of presidential television advertisements.

There have been several cultural studies in the field of political communication that focus on lower-ballot races as well. Joslyn (1980) analyzed gubernatorial, senatorial, and presidential ads from 1960 to 1976, finding that issue-related content was more common than personal information about the candidate. Humke, Schmitt, and Grupp (1975) examined political ads from 1932 to 1960, discovering that the main theme in almost two-thirds of the ads was candidate or party, while issues were the central focus of only one-third. Similarly, Latimer (1985) found that image was more popular than policy in campaign newspaper ads from 1978 to 1984. Finally, Sherr (1999, p. 55) examined the portrayal of children in political television spots produced from 1950 to 1996, concluding that "certain thematic patterns" associating children with issues such as poverty, war, and crime emerged**.**

Ultimately, taking a cultural approach will offer as many questions as it answers. In doing so, it follows in the footsteps of other scholars (e.g. Jamieson 1984) who have used this method in examining different types of advertising media as they have come of age. Despite the study's limitations, which are discussed in Chapter 7, examining campaign Web sites from a cultural perspective should advance our knowledge of both politicians and, more importantly, of modern-day political campaigns.

POLITICIANS ON THE WEB

While tens of millions of Americans happily digest a daily diet of "you've got mail," a small group of citizens remains wary of e-mail, unsure how to fit it into their daily routine -- and often downright resentful of it. No, they aren't your **great-grandparents**. They're your **Congress**. -- *Ault, A. and Jones, K. (1999, ¶ 1-2). Vote.com Web site.*

Legislator Web Sites

Illustration 2.2: Rep. Van Hilleary (R-TN) as featured on http://www.house.gov\hilleary.

The 436 men and women who serve in the U.S. House represent countless constituents across the country, and communicating with these citizens is a task to which they devote a great deal of time, energy, and money. In fact, on average, House offices use an estimated 30 to 60 percent of their staff resources answering citizens' correspondence and providing various services (Browning et al. 2001). Additionally, Representatives spend a great many weekends in their home districts shaking hands, making speeches, and breaking bread with residents.

In short, House members make an enormous effort to keep in touch with citizens, and several have publicly praised the potential of the Internet in helping them accomplish that task. Speaking at a press conference in 1995, former Speaker of the House Newt Gingrich (R-GA) jubilantly predicted, "Part of what

[the Internet] is going to do is to get legislation and legislative materials beyond the cynicism of the elite, and you are going to see a dramatic expansion of an intellectual populism that Jefferson would have dreamed of," (Ubois 1995, p. 45). In 1996, Rep. Vernon Ehlers (R-MI) exclaimed, "[The Internet] is going to be a positive development in our democracy," (DeLoach 1996). And even further up the ballot, in November 1999, then-President Bill Clinton urged the public to "Keep those e-mails coming into the White House," (Hall 1999, p. 6A).

Nonetheless, the enthusiastic words of these and other prominent politicians have not necessarily reflected their actions. Though the Internet and the Web have the potential to become an important means of informing constituents and winning votes, the literature indicates that politicians, steadfastly clinging to tried-and-true methods of conducting business, have been slow to embrace the medium. This observation seems particularly true of sitting legislators. For example, by 1999, Speaker of the House Dennis Hastert (R-IL) had still not devised a way to reply to e-mail messages, even though his office received almost 1,000 e-mails daily (Ault and Jones 1999). In that same year, twenty-two House members had yet to provide e-mail addresses, and many who did so expressed reluctance to use them. For example, Rep. Barney Frank (D-MA) voiced concern that answering citizens' e-mails “would place too great a strain on my resources and my staff's ability to keep up with their already heavy work load." And Rep. Bill Young (R-FL) worried publicly that responding to

every e-mail “might force me to hire additional staff to wade through non-constituent communications and ‘spam’ junk mail,” (Ault and Jones 1999, ¶ 13). As Rep. Anna Eshoo (D-CA) observed of her own colleagues, most of whom still use aides to do the majority of their computer work, “Their understanding is growing, but unless individual members actually use the Net themselves, they won’t be savvy in terms of the discussion and debate around proposed legislation,” (as cited in Lynch 2000, ¶ 15).

Journalists and academics have also taken note of legislators' practice of publicly praising the wonders of the Internet while privately keeping their distance; one need only glance at a sampling of article titles over the past few years to obtain an accurate picture of the situation. The headline from a 1999 story by Ault and Jones reads, "Three Words Congress Hates to Hear: You've Got Mail," and the BBC (2002) recently informed Britains that the "U.S. Congress Drowns in E-mail." Similarly, Lynch (2000) drew readers' attention to the slow pace at which Congress is adapting to the Internet in an article entitled, "Democracy Goes Digital...Bit by Bit: Some Members of Congress are Still Clueless When it Comes to the Internet." Scholars Musso, Weare, and Hale (2000, p. 16) claim that most government sites focus on "superficial information and communication capabilities that merely mimic existing communication systems" while neglecting to provide "more detailed content that might enrich citizens' access to their governments." And finally, Stromer-Galley (2000, p.127)

asserts that most government sites consist merely of "controlled, highly crafted information, similar to a campaign brochure or a television advertisement."

The reasons that many legislators seem unable or unwilling to accept the Web as a viable means of communicating with citizens are unclear. Perhaps congressional offices do not have the skills or resources to master the Web. Information technology consultant Kathy Goldschmidt (as cited in Matthews 2001, ¶ 12) states, "Congress is still struggling to figure out what the technology means and how to use it effectively. So far, the technology is a little overwhelming." Likewise, since there is no real central authority for congressional Web sites, there may be confusion among legislators about how to handle the complex issues that can arise when dealing with the Web. Most significantly, speaking to a theme that arises throughout this dissertation, many observers sense a hesitancy on the part of House members to be *too accessible* to the public. As Goldschmidt (as cited in Matthews 2001, ¶ 12) observes, "They don't want [to be connected to the public], they want to be independent."

Perhaps the observations of Browning et al. (2001, Introduction section, ¶ 5) most accurately reflect the relationship between Congress and the Internet. In their extensive study of House Web sites, the researchers note:

> The large majority of Congressional offices treat their Web sites as ancillary to their duties, rather than integral to them. They don't see them as deserving priority attention and they devote minimal office time to them. They update them haphazardly or when time permits. They post content that highlights the activities and achievements ...rather than

creating content specifically geared to meeting the needs of their audiences. They give inadequate attention to designing user-friendly sites. Finally, they use their Web sites to promote their off line services -- or to encourage people to contact their offices by phone or mail -- rather than recognizing that Web users want their needs met quickly online.

Candidate Web Sites

Illustration 2.3: Incumbent candidate Earl Blumenauer (D-OR) as featured on http://www.earlblumenauer.com.

> At stop after stop, speech after speech, as the train pulls slowly out of town, the people stand in the weeds beside the railroad tracks and wave. For mile after mile they line the broken and gullied ground. They hold up their babies and dogs and shout their goodbyes to the president...Bill Clinton stands on an open-air platform on the back of the last train car. He speaks into a microphone that is connected to four loudspeakers on the roof. And he says, "Bye! Bye! Thank you! Thank you!" Though, because he is in full campaign mode now, and therefore lapsing back into his soft Arkansas drawl, it comes out, "Bah! Bah! Thang-kyew!" He waves and waves at the people until the light fades and the last person is a shadow in the twilight and the train picks up speed and his staff asks him to come inside and work on the speech he will deliver at the Democratic convention...He turns for the door, but before he opens it, he reaches above him and pulls a cord, and the long, mournful **toot-toot** of Bill Clinton's last campaign hurtles through the night. -- *excerpt from R. Simon's Showtime: The American Political Circus and the Race for the White House (1998, p. 225-226).*

While legislative jobs are known for their oft-cushy hours, long vacation periods, and relative isolation from the public, as the Clinton snippet illustrates, political campaigns are another animal altogether. Campaigns, in fact, are considered *more* than a full-time job by most who experience them. Ehrenhalt (1992, p. 229) states that to win a congressional seat in the early 1990s required "the raising of half a million dollars or more, the yearlong disruption of personal and professional time, and the indignities of hand-to-hand campaigning." Today, the stakes are even higher; the average competitive House race continues for more than a year and costs well over $1 million (Sweeney in Thurber and Nelson 1995). In short, successful congressional candidates and their staffs put an enormous amount of time and effort into their campaigns, and most of the available research to date suggests that the same amount of care is put into political advertising, including campaign Web sites.

Though it is widely agreed that there is still room for improvement, the current literature shows that upper-level campaign sites are generally *informative, creative*, and *innovative* (aspects that will be further examined in later chapters), perhaps indicating that candidates are thinking progressively about the types of content, design, and technologies that will enhance the experiences of online users and encourage repeat visits. Following, a brief summary of the available readings on these three areas is provided.

Information

One of the biggest mistakes a candidate can make is neglecting to let site visitors know who they are and why they're running for office. Arming potential voters with plenty of substantive information is, in the words of political Web design consultant Lynn Reed, "Web site 101," (as cited in Jalonick, 2000, ¶ 2). While this sort of information is abundant in traditional campaign image and issue ads, some congressional candidates are apparently using the Web "like a toy -- a place to post unedited rantings, to use as a family album, to experiment with graphics," (Jalonick 2000, ¶ 1-2) rather than as a storehouse for important personal and political details.

Another group of candidates, however, is passing the information test with flying colors. These candidates understand the importance of loading their sites with the kinds of details their target audiences are looking for, such as substantive issue positions and press releases. For example, 2002 House incumbents Dennis Moore (D-KS) and Chris Cannon (R-UT) supplied online visitors with ample information about their political beliefs while organizing their campaign sites in a way that allowed users to quickly and easily read summaries of where they stood on each issue. Additionally, candidates Joe Turnham (D-AL) and Chris Cooper (D-TN) provided the public and the media with an abundance of detailed, up-to-date press releases; Turnham's site offered a total of 16 releases, while Cooper's included 15.

Candidates are also using the Web to post political information with a more partisan slant. For instance, Steve Biener (R-DE) and Bart Stupak (R-MI) echoed the platform of President Bush by stressing lower taxes on their Web sites, while Adam Cox (D-TN) and Sam Farr (D-CA) emphasized the environment. Similarly, several candidates in highly competitive House races used their sites to either launch attacks or defend themselves against barbs from opponents. For instance, House challenger Joseph Henry Nixon (R-CA) posted a statement on his site accusing Democratic incumbent Anna Eshoo of being "quiet on [her] military voting record," and challenger Joe Marine (R-WA) called his opponent, Democratic incumbent Rick Larsen, "out of touch with the views and values of his constituents."

In fact, the idea of using political opposition on the Web is even popular at the presidential level. The 2000 presidential campaign site of Al Gore displayed an online ticker that counted in minutes and seconds "how long George W. Bush has managed to bob and weave away from debating Al Gore," while the Bush campaign's debatefacts.com site reloaded every 80 seconds during the 2000 television debates, providing up to 35 instant rebuttals per debate.

Creativity

Besides being informative, many political observers have praised upper-level campaign sites for their eye-catching creativity. Mark (2002, ¶ 1) noted that several 2002 House candidates had "broken the mold" by using "original or interesting graphics, photographs or other features that have the potential to win the votes of those with only a casual interest in politics." Likewise, Jalonick (2000, ¶ 1-2) observed that many 2002 campaign sites were "not only following standards but helping to create a new set of rules for this new way of advertising themselves." Sums Jalonick, "U.S. House candidate sites are suddenly interesting and innovative."

Some scholars have also hailed the creativity found in the biographical descriptions of House candidates (Jarvis and Wilkerson 2002; Klotz 1997; West 1999). For instance, Jalonick (2000, ¶ 2) claims that candidates "have found some inventive ways to inform interested surfers about their lives and career accomplishments." Rather than resembling the typical House member's laundry list of committee appointments and legislation, candidate biographies -- important for providing visitors with a personal connection -- are apt to read like this excerpt from candidate Dennis Engler's (R-CA) site:

> ...family has always been the cornerstone of strength in this country. When the opportunity presents itself, we like many of you, tend to treasure such memorable events as barbecues, pizza parties, baseball games and camping...we enjoy the beauty of the mountains as well as the ocean.

Technological Innovations

Finally, a number of studies have shown that campaign sites are effectively utilizing technological innovations. Spurred by John McCain's 2000 fundraising success, almost all upper-ballot campaign sites are able to accept online contributions, and most have the ability to sign up volunteers. Some tech-savvy candidates even incorporate audio files, video files, and campaign ads into their sites. For example, one section of congressional candidate Paul Williams' (R-TX) site offered visitors eight symphonic selections of patriotic music, including "Hail to the Chief" and "Stars and Stripes Forever." The site of another House candidate, incumbent Ron Paul (R-TX), featured multimedia clips from several of his campaign ads, and even allowed visitors to listen to the "Ron Paul Ballad" as sung by the candidate's grandchildren.

POLITICAL ADVERTISING AND ADVANCEMENTS IN INFORMATION TECHNOLOGIES

Many new channels of political communication emerged in the latter 20th century, exposing the public to a growing number of mass-mediated messages during election season. Just as political ads, currently the most popular form of campaign communication, have their roots in the campaign banners and buttons

of years past (see Jamieson 1984), many view Web sites as an extension of these advertising traditions.

Though history has shown that there is a natural hesitancy to embrace new mediums, cynics need only look back to the early days of radio and television, and the comparable criticisms being aimed at those new media. As Stephens (1998, p. 9) observed when comparing the evolution of the Internet to that of writing and the letterpress, "It takes a long time to realize the potential of a new form of communications -- much longer than those who are living through these changes expect." Adds Schwoch (1990, p. 55-56), "Despite the seeming ease of the transformational shift from radio to television, the process of change was rife with questions, uncertainty, and contradictory decisions." In fact, the "digital divide" is actually a new label for a similar construct created in the early 1900s by AT&T president Theodore Vail, who used the term "universal service" when referring to his wish to integrate the highly fragmented local telephone companies into a single nationally interconnected system (Compaine 2001). Similarly, the digital divide is predated by the issue of "information haves and have nots," a phrase many used to represent the need for access to personal computers almost as soon as the Apple II was installed in its first school in 1980 (Compaine 2001).

Politicians, along with the general public, have participated in voicing doubts about new communication mediums. For instance, when the radio was just coming to the forefront, New York Senator Elihu Root exclaimed when a

microphone was placed in front of him, "Take that away. I can talk to a Democrat, but I cannot speak into a dead thing," (Jamieson 1984, p. 19). Likewise, though Franklin D. Roosevelt delivered an address to a television audience of around 100,000 viewers from the World's Fair in New York in 1939, it was not until 1948 -- almost a decade later -- that politicians began "factoring television coverage into their political equations," (Jamieson 1984, p. 34). To some observers, it appears that the relationship between politicians, the Internet, and the Web is traveling down the same wary path.

CURRENT STUDY

Background

Society's enthusiasm for, and growing reliance on, the Internet and the Web has added a new dimension to the political communications environment. The popularity of the Web as a means of gathering political information, and its ability to facilitate democratic participation, forces modern-day candidates and legislators to grapple with the issue of communicating through political Web sites.

What makes the situation even more interesting is this: the arrival of the Internet and the World Wide Web has encouraged politicians (much like corporations and other non-government groups) to become transparent in a way

that other media have not. As was previously mentioned, while candidates are known for their tireless public campaigning, it has traditionally been the practice of sitting legislators to remain tucked safely away from the peering -- and often, interfering -- eyes of the public (see Turner 2001). With the advent of the Internet and the Web, however, *both* of these groups are expected not only to post sites, but to participate in the online political community.

We know that most candidates and legislators have Web sites; what we do not yet understand are the cultural and societal implications that take place when a traditionally *private* group like legislators is forced to take a seat at the online table with candidates -- a much more *public* entity. This situation brings about several intriguing questions. What online advertising strategies are candidates and legislators using? How are the sites of these two groups similar? How are they different?

Contribution

Over the years, traditional campaign ads have been analyzed in a number of ways. The impact of political advertising on voter behavior, candidate evaluations, information processing, and voter utility has dominated effects research for the last several decades (Atkin et al. 1973; Cundy 1986; Garramone 1983; Joslyn 1980; Kaid and Sanders 1978; Kaid, Leland and Whitney 1992;

Keating and LaTane 1976; Meadow and Sigelman 1982; Perloff and Kinsey 1992). Additionally, many experiments have focused on the effects of negative political ads (Ansolabehere and Iyengar 1995; Clinger 1987; Gans 1985; Kaid and Boydston 1987; Kellerman 1989; Lau 1982, 1985; Martz 1988; Surlin and Gordon 1977; Ward 1995) or positive image-based spots (Kaid, Leland and Whitney 1992; Kaid 1997). Methodologically, content analysis of political advertising has been popular among academics (Joslyn 1980; Patterson and McClure 1976), as has historical and interpretive analysis (Diamond and Bates 1984, 1988, 1992; Jamieson 1984).

While the above-mentioned studies have made valuable contributions to the fields of advertising, communication, and political science, they do not provide contemporary insight as to how candidates are selling themselves on the Web. To improve upon this research, Bimber (2001) suggests that scholars focus on the *content* of the Web, particularly with regard to the contributions that content can make to the political communication environment. With Bimber's suggestion in mind, the primary purpose of this study was to gain a better understanding of how candidates are packaged and presented online through a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods.

As was discussed in the Introduction, for the qualitative portion of the study, telephone interviews with political Web design professionals were conducted specifically to provide insight into the minds of the elites who are

actually involved in helping politicians establish and maintain an online presence. This method was chosen because it was anticipated that the interview responses would display a richness and depth that would be lacking in a survey or another less personal method. The quantitative method selected for this project was a content analysis of a large sample of U.S. House campaign Web sites, which were subsequently compared to a similarly large sample of sites representing sitting congresspersons. It was believed that, in conjunction with the interviews, the content analysis would allow for a more thorough examination of the actual creative product, and would provide independent confirmation of whether the sites actually reflected the thoughts and ideas that surfaced during the Web designer interviews.

SUMMARY

Campaign Web sites are an important area of study for at least three reasons. First, the Web, like more traditional media outlets, is now regarded by many as a legitimate source of campaign information. Second, candidates are slowly dealing with the realization that the Web may become an important tool for communicating with citizens. Finally, some observers predict that the Web will greatly serve democracy by increasing interactivity between politicians and

voters. In fact, Matthews (2000, ¶ 47) claims that, "...with billions of dollars spent each year on local, state, and national elections, the Web is sure to become a bigger political player in the future."

The relationship between the Internet, the Web, and political communication is only beginning to be understood. Because earlier studies have been built upon assumptions and variables that may or may not be valid, and since those studies have generally provided descriptive (Adler, Gent and Overmeyer 1997; Bimber 1997; Corman 1994; Jarvis 1996; Klotz 1997) or speculative (Birdsall et al. 1996; Fisher, Margolis and Resnick 1996; Ornstein and Schenkenberg 1996) analyses, it seems a prime opportunity to think progressively about the Web and its role as a political advertising medium.

Given the observations of past researchers, it was expected that legislators would hold less favorable attitudes toward their Web sites than would political candidates. As King (2002, ¶ 7) states, "One should not expect Congress to become an Internet well of public dialogue anytime soon. To the extent that lawmakers continue to feel that 'too much' information and 'too many' opinions are already available to them, Congress will continue using the Internet as a fancy all-hours viewing gallery in which citizens constitute the audience and little else." While this study did not attempt to directly measure politicians' *attitudes* toward the Internet and the Web, it was believed that their feelings could be discerned through conversations with political Web designers (see Chapter Four), and

through a systematic examination of Web site content (see Chapters Five and Six).

As has already been stated, with the exception of a handful of studies (see Jarvis and Wilkerson 2002; Klotz 1997), most observations of political Web sites have been purely anecdotal. Additionally, no known studies to date have compared the online strategies of political candidates with those of elected officials. Based upon the available research, it was assumed that political candidates would embrace the Web in much the same way that they have embraced traditional campaign advertising. Conversely, it was believed that sitting politicians would be more ambivalent about selling themselves online. In an effort to address these issues, and to learn more about the online strategies of candidates and legislators, the author proposed the following five hypotheses:

H1: Political candidates will include more *information content* on their campaign Web sites than will legislators on their official House sites.

H2: Political candidates will include more *creative content* on their campaign Web sites than will legislators on their official House sites.

H3: Political candidates will include more *technological content* on their campaign Web sites than will legislators on their official House sites.

H4: Political candidates will include more *partisan content* on their campaign Web sites than will legislators on their official House sites.

H5: Political candidates will include more *political opposition* on their campaign Web sites than will legislators on their official House sites.

Chapter 3: Methodology

To address the study's hypotheses, the author relied on two data collection methods which were briefly mentioned in the preceding chapter: in-depth interviews with political Web design professionals, and a content analysis of 145 campaign sites (see Appendix). Data from the campaign sites was also compared with a sample of 118 official House sites to determine the similarities and differences with which candidates and legislators are presenting themselves online (see Appendix). Again, distinctions are made between the Internet (a large network that links smaller computer networks around the world) and the Web (the multimedia segment of the Internet) in this chapter and throughout the course of the dissertation.

It should also be noted that in studying these sites, it was discovered that there is a bias in the research that all political candidates are well-funded and well-advised. This bias led the author to believe that candidates would have more resources with which to build Web sites that were more informative (in both political and non-political ways), more creative, and more technologically innovative than those of legislators. In fact, it was discovered that this is generally not the case. As such, in many places throughout the remainder of this study, the distinction will be made between incumbents (who are typically wealthy) and challengers (who are sometimes wealthy and sometimes not).

MEASUREMENT CRITERIA

The interview questions and Web site coding scheme focused primarily on the strategies involved in selling candidates and elected officials on the Web. More specifically, the analyses addressed the study's hypotheses by exploring five major aspects of political Web sites conceptualized by the author: information content, creative content, technological content, partisan content, and political opposition. Following, each variable is described in greater detail as it relates to the interviews and content analysis.

Information Content

The first variable examined on campaign and legislative sites was information content. For purposes of this study, information is characterized as the educational content and services provided on a site; it is also the "most extensive and most substantive factor of a congressional Web site," (Browning et al. 2001, Five Building Blocks section, ¶ 6). Many believe that politicians can connect more deeply with their target audiences by providing them with high quality information -- a job made easier than ever due to the Web's relatively low cost and high reach. For instance, information once difficult for the average citizen to obtain, such as campaign finance figures, lobbying data, and voting

information is now conveniently accessible through the Internet. Other types of political information, including issue positions, educational facts about Congress, press releases, and biographies can also be made available through the Web sites of politicians.

To address the topic of information content in the **interviews**, thirteen political Web design professionals were queried as to who, in their experience, made the majority of decisions regarding the content of the Web sites they created. The designers were also asked which types of information were most important to them, and to the candidates for whom they worked (see Table 3.6 for a complete interview guide). For the **content analysis**, the coding scheme associated with the variable of information featured eight values for legislators and fourteen for candidates. These values, listed in Table 3.1, emerged from a prior analysis of congressional homepages conducted by Jarvis and Wilkerson (2002).

Table 3.1

Indicators for Information Content

Feature	Measure
Biography	yes (1), no (2)
Contact information	yes (1), no (2)
District information/map	yes (1), no (2)
Issues (Basic)	yes (1), no (2)
Issue type	(1) children/family, (2) crime, (3) defense/military, (4) drugs (illegal), (5) economy/jobs, (6) education, (7) energy/ environment, (8) health care/prescription drugs, (9) immigration, (10) internet/ technology, (11) social security/seniors, (12) taxes, (13) terrorism, (14) veterans, (15) welfare, (16) other
Issues (Controversial)	yes (1), no (2)
Issue type	(1) abortion, (2) capital punishment, (3) gay/lesbian, (4) racial issues/affirmative action, (5) religion, (6) other
Press releases	yes (1), no (2); number of press releases
Privacy statement	yes (1), no (2)
Site last updated	yes (1), no (2); date site was last updated
Campaign staff information	yes (1), no (2)
Disclosure of site sponsorship	yes (1), no (2)
Endorsements	yes (1), no (2)
Events schedule	yes (1), no (2)
Voting information	yes (1), no (2)
Web designer name	yes (1), no (2)

Notes: Italics indicate candidate-only measures. Numbers in parentheses correspond to the values in the codebook.

Creative Content

The second variable examined on the sites was creative content, and Parnes (1975, p. 225) provides a fitting characterization for this project. Parnes defines creativity as "the fresh and relevant association of thoughts, facts, and ideas, into a new configuration which pleases, which has meaning beyond the sum of the parts, which provides a synergistic effect."

Online creativity is important because Web sites are primarily a visual medium, and the ways in which words and images work together can greatly affect the messages being presented, as well as the experience of the visitor. Thorough attention to layout, graphics, color, and other creative aspects help to ensure that a site is user-friendly *and* inviting; conversely, too many links, photos, or graphics, may distract or even deter visitors.

For the **interviews**, issues such as creative freedom and design features were discussed at length in an effort to learn more about how creative content is developed for campaign sites. The designers were also invited to offer insight as to what features they believed made a site truly creative. For the **content analysis**, site creativity was measured through an examination of four values for legislators and seven for candidates. Again, the three additional values were specific to campaigns (see Table 3.2).

Table 3.2

Indicators for Creative Content

Feature	Measure
Graphics	total number and type of graphics
Greeting message	yes (1), no (2)
Kid's activities	yes (1), no (2)
Photos	yes (1), no (2)
Photo type	(1) candidate/legislator, (2) citizen, (3) D.C., (4) family
Campaign advertisements	yes (1), no (2)
Downloadable campaign materials	yes (1) no (2); total number and type of materials
Pop-up advertisements	yes (1), no (2)
Pop-up advertisement type	(1) fundraising solicitation, (2) welcome, (3) volunteer

Notes: Italics indicate candidate-only measures. Numbers in parentheses correspond to the values in the codebook.

Technological Content

Technological content was the third variable examined in the study; it is characterized as "the products of creative and strategic thinking about what features and devices will enhance a visitor's experience on a Web site," (Browning et al. 2001, Five Building Blocks section, ¶ 36). Technology is significant in that it helps politicians better communicate with audiences through multimedia; it also assists in keeping visitors engaged and interested. For politicians who choose to set up bulletin boards or chat rooms, technological innovations even allow online visitors to communicate with one another.

To discern which types of technology candidates are using on their sites,

and to what extent, the **interview** participants were asked several questions concerning such topics as the attitudes of candidates toward technology, the types of high-tech features available at this time, and the costs of using those features. To assess technological innovation in the **content analysis**, nine Web site values were measured for legislators, while thirteen were measured for candidates (see Table 3.3).

Table 3.3

Indicators for Technological Content

Feature	Measure
Audio files	yes (1), no (2); total number and type of audio files
Bulletin board/chat room	yes (1), no (2)
Counter	yes (1), no (2)
E-mail friends/family	yes (1), no (2)
E-mail newsletter sign-up	yes (1), no (2)
Multimedia	yes (1), no (2); total number and type of multimedia
Polls and surveys	yes (1), no (2)
Search engine	yes (1), no (2)
Video files	yes (1), no (2); total number and type of video files
Campaign merchandise	yes (1), no (2)
Contribute	yes (1), no (2)
Feedback form	yes (1), no (2)
Volunteer information	yes (1), no (2)

Notes: Italics indicate candidate-only measures. Numbers in parentheses correspond to the values in the codebook.

Partisan Content

Partisanship, the fourth variable assessed for this dissertation, has been described as the steady and continuing connection an individual feels toward a particular political party (Sanders et al. 2002). Partisanship is extremely important for both politicians and voters for at least two reasons. First, affiliation with a political party often works as a shortcut, influencing individuals to vote in ways that reflect their party's values and ideas. Second, partisanship frequently serves as a screen through which citizens interpret new political information. For purposes of this study, partisan content is characterized as an online reference to a candidate or legislator's own political party.

To determine how partisan content is used on campaign sites, the **interview** participants were asked how candidates feel about revealing their political affiliations online, and about their own attitudes toward bringing partisan politics to the Web; the construct of partisan content was fully explained by the author before each interviewee was allowed to respond. For the **content analysis**, partisan content was measured by noting the number and type of photographs, words, or graphics on the sites that represented either the Republican or Democratic party. Online partisan cues were sometimes obvious, such as the statement "Mark Sanford, Republican for Congress" or the use of the Democratic donkey. On the other hand, partisanship could be quite subtle or even difficult to discern. For instance, a politician might use the name of a well-known colleague

in a positive way e.g. "George W. Bush's tax cuts have greatly helped our country," or display a photograph of a prominent party member or personality like Al Gore or Rush Limbaugh. It should be noted that uses of "republican" or "democrat" in a lower-case sense e.g. "I am proud to live in a democratic society" were not counted as partisanship. A complete list of partisan cues as specified in the codebook can be found at the end of the subsequent section in Table 3.4.

Political Opposition

The fifth aspect of campaign and legislative Web sites examined by the author was political opposition. Hagan (1993) suggests that there are two significant sources of domestic political opposition. The first source includes political divisions within the organization itself, arising from a group's cohesiveness, leadership arrangement, or divergence over issues. The second source comes from outside the group, primarily from opposing political groups and parties. It is the latter of the two sources that this study is concerned with. In an earlier study of congressional Web sites, Jarvis and Wilkerson (2002, p. 21) defined political opposition as "fault-finding or antipathy for the institution." Likewise, in this dissertation, political opposition is conceptualized as detected anger or resentment toward a rival political party or a specific political candidate.

To explore the topic of political opposition in the **interviews**, the Web designers were asked whether or not they and the candidates they represented were comfortable with displaying political opposition online, and why this was (or was not) the case. To ensure that the participants understood what the author meant by political opposition, the conceptual definition of the term, along with several actual examples of political opposition, were offered. In the **content analysis**, political opposition was measured for candidates using four indicators: (1) attack ads introducing opposition, (2) attack ads responding to opposition, (3) press releases introducing opposition; and (4) press releases responding to opposition. Since House members are forbidden by law (U.S. House of Representatives 2002, p. 216) to include campaign ads or even references to campaigns on their official government sites, political opposition on legislative sites was measured using only two indicators: (1) press releases introducing opposition, and (2) press releases responding to opposition (see Table 3.4). Examples might include an online ad entitled "Why Rep. Mike Rogers is soft on crime," or a press release proclaiming "The sad state of Texas' economy under Rep. Tom DeLay."

Table 3.4

Indicators for Partisan Content and Political Opposition

Feature	Measure
Partisanship	yes (1), no (2)
Partisanship type	(1) photo with prominent party member, (2) partisan graphic(s), (3) partisan text(s)
Political opposition	yes (1), no (2)
Political opposition type	(1) attack ads introducing opposition, (2) attack ads responding to opposition, (3) press releases/text introducing opposition, (4) press releases/text responding to opposition

INTERVIEWS

Kahn and Cannell (1957) describe the interview research method as “a conversation with a purpose." In-depth interviews, often referred to by scholars as elite interviews (Dexter 1970; Marshall and Rossman 1995), are generally regarded as a useful and effective technique for researching political topics. In the past, interviews have proven helpful in such tasks as: (1) collecting historical background, (2) assembling fundamental facts about a political problem, (3) evaluating political positions and assets, (4) gathering political sources and materials; and (5) developing ideas about the future of politics (Johnson, Joslyn and Reynolds 2001).

The elite interview method was selected because it was believed that the

qualitative data would add a unique descriptive dimension to the study that would not have been attained using quantitative data alone. Further, this type of analysis is significant in that no known studies published to date have examined the topic of campaign Web site design using the elite interview method; until now, research has been based largely on analyses of the end product (i.e. Web sites) rather than the process itself. Moreover, interviews are highly under-utilized in the field of advertising. While this technique has been used in a handful of studies -- for example, to probe copywriters about their creative processes (Kover 1995) and to determine how French creative directors develop advertising strategies (Taylor, Hoy and Haley 1996) -- advertising academics have largely relied on quantitative methods and empirical effects research.

Sample and Procedure

To gather a pool of interview participants, forty-six individuals (or companies, if no specific contact name could be found) who designed campaign Web sites as their main line of business were contacted by e-mail. As was mentioned in the Introduction, roughly one-third of the names were obtained from an article in the political trade publication Campaigns & Elections (2001), which provided a listing of reputable political design firms; the remaining designers were located either through a Yahoo search, or because their company's name

appeared on one of the congressional Web sites coded for this study. Of those contacted, thirteen individuals (19%) agreed to participate in a thirty to forty-five minute telephone interview[2].

Of the thirteen individuals who participated in the interviews, twelve (92%) were male. The respondents came from a variety of states including: California, Kentucky, Illinois, Maryland, Minnesota, Ohio, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Virginia, and Washington, D.C. (see Table 3.5). All but one of the participants was an owner or co-owner of the company they represented, and each had extensive experience designing upper-level (e.g. presidential, gubernatorial, senatorial) campaign sites. For instance, the sample included a designer who helped create the 2000 George W. Bush for President site and is currently working on Bush's campaign site for 2004, and another who played a central role in the development of the 1996 Clinton/Gore campaign site as well as Bill Bradley's 2000 presidential campaign site. Also included were a consultant who worked for over four years as a member of Yahoo's "Think Tank Swat Team," a past marketing and public affairs executive for C-SPAN, an ex-member of the Minnesota State Legislature, and a former Internet consultant for CNN's AllPolitics.com.

In addition to their technical expertise, most of the interviewees expressed

[2] It should be noted that while a few of the interviewees actually developed *and* built political Web sites, the majority worked only as design consultants, leaving the actual site construction to others in their organizations.

a lifelong passion for politics. In fact, some could even point to certain life events that sparked their interest. For instance, one developed a love of politics after doing volunteer campaign work in grammar school, and another stated that he was "completely transformed" while watching Ronald Reagan accept the GOP nomination in 1980[3]. Several participants had been involved with political campaigns in one form or another for many years. One designer acknowledged that he had been doing political work since volunteering for the Carter/Mondale campaign as a college student in the mid-1970s, while another worked as a legislative aide for Ohio Congressperson Deborah Pryce immediately upon graduation from college. Additionally, one of the designers, a Washington, D.C. native, stated that he had worked for the Republican National Committee, interned in Dan Quayle's office during his vice-presidency, and volunteered for the 2000 George W. Bush presidential campaign in Iowa.

[3] I10.

Table 3.5

Web Design Interviewees, Firms, and Locations

Interviewee	Design Firm	Location
I1	Vote For Us	Manhattan Beach, CA
I2	CampaignOffice.com	St. Paul, MN
I3	NetPolitics Group	Washington, D.C.
I4	Internet Campaign Solutions	Arlington, VA
I5	Landslide Design	Rockville, MD
I6	WiredVoter	Columbus, OH
I7	Campaign HQ	Middlesboro, KY
I8	Anonymous Democratic firm	Washington, D.C.
I9	Liberty Concepts	Philadelphia, PA
I10	Patriot Campaign Consulting	Towanda, IL
I11	VoteNet Solutions	Washington, D.C.
I12	Phil Noble & Associates	Charleston, SC
I13	GovTech Solutions	Washington, D.C.

According to McCracken (1988, p. 17), the primary goal of the qualitative interview "is not to discover how many, and what kinds of people share a certain characteristic. It is to gain access to the cultural categories and assumptions according to which one culture construes the world." Given this objective, a list of ten questions (see Table 3.6) served as an informal discussion guide for the interviews. The questions were carefully constructed by the author to ensure that each of the study's five hypotheses were addressed. Sample questions included: What is the most important function of a campaign site? Do you think that candidates see Web sites as an integral part of their campaigns? What, is the role of the Web site in an integrated campaign strategy?

The interviews were conducted over a two-week period in July and

August of 2002. Questions were sent in advance to each consultant via e-mail so that they would prepared to speak to the topics at hand, and to ensure that they felt qualified to participate. The interviews ranged from 30 minutes to two hours in length, with the average session lasting 44 minutes.

The interviews were not tape-recorded for confidentiality reasons. Instead, the discussions were transcribed by hand, and typed out in full immediately following each conversation. Once all interviews were completed, the analytic induction method (Goetz and LeCompte 1981; Znaniecki 1934) was used to determine common themes in the responses. Analytic induction is a qualitative method described by Znaniecki (1934), who named the technique and systematized many of its related concepts. According to Ratliff (2002), the goal of this method is to construct general statements that can be revised at a later time if discrepancies are found, but will ideally accurately reflect the collective knowledge on a given topic. Using analytic induction, the author discerned four broad categories central to the designers' constructions of campaign Web site creation: development of site content, site maintenance, site features and functions, and site integration. These categories are further discussed in Chapter Four.

As past scholars have noted, though every attempt was made to preserve the original content as described by each participant, no interpretation can completely reflect the phenomenon it was intended to represent (Geertz 1983;

Hirschman 1986; Hirschman 1989; Wolff 1975). However, to ensure that the analysis mirrored the interviewees' original thoughts and ideas as closely as possible, pertinent draft sections were sent to the designers for their comments, corrections, and approval. No misrepresentations were reported.

All but one participant granted the author permission to use his or her name and company name in the study though they are generally referred to by number. The designers were not provided monetary compensation for their time; instead, they were offered a summary of the study results or a copy of the entire dissertation in CD-Rom format. All of the subjects requested a copy of the dissertation.

The interviewees were encouraged to speak freely and to steer the direction of the conversation toward the topics they felt were most important concerning online campaign strategy. This principle, supported by Plato (see Katz 1954) as well as other more contemporary scholars (see Lazarsfeld 1986), was beneficial in that it allowed the author to draw more fruitful insights than would a more rigidly- constructed situation.

Table 3.6

Interview Guide

1. How long have you been designing campaign Web sites and how did you become interested in this type of work?
2. Who decides on the content of a political Web site -- you, the candidate, or both?
3. What, in your opinion, is the most important function of a campaign site?
4. Who does the day-to-day maintenance on the sites that you design?
5. Do you think that candidates see Web sites as an integral part of their campaigns?
6. What would you say are the most common feature(s) requested by candidates?
7. What, in your opinion, is the role of the Web site in an integrated campaign strategy? How important do you think candidate sites will be as a campaign tool in the future?
8. Is there a site you're most proud of? If so, what is it about that site that makes it stand out?
9. Is there anything that you definitely would not put on a campaign site?
10. Are there any parting thoughts that you would like to add?

While quantitative methods such as content analysis leave less room for speculation, issues of reliability have often been used as criticisms of qualitative research. For instance, it could be argued that interview participants are led to provide certain answers through leading questions, or that interviewee responses are subject to a variety of interpretations (Kvale 1994). As such, it is important for the author to address the issue of qualitative reliability as it pertains to this study.

The primary goal of the qualitative interview is to gather a person's knowledge and beliefs, to understand them, and then explain that experience to

others. With qualitative research, it is generally accepted that both sides of the process could be influenced. As was mentioned earlier in the chapter, each of the data sets (e.g. interviews and content analysis) used in this dissertation provide insight into the current state of political Web sites, and it is believed that the two methods sufficiently complement each other. Additional reliability is built into the study due to the fact that two units of analysis (i.e. campaign and legislative sites) are examined, and perhaps most importantly, because the author enlisted the help of the three independent coders, whose work will be described in more detail in the following section.

CONTENT ANALYSIS

Content analysis is the research method of choice for many studies in the fields of communication and political science, and it is a standard analytical tool in advertising research (Kolbe and Burnett 1991). In fact, Abernethy and Franke (1996) found that as of 1996, this method had been used in almost 60 published advertising studies. Among them, content analysis has been implemented in comparing magazine ads in the U.S. and abroad (Al-Olayan and Karande 2000; Resnik and Stern 1977), examining advertising images of women across cultures (Maynard and Taylor 1999), evaluating the commercial content of messages targeted at children (Alexander et al. 1998), interpreting disclosures in prime-time

children's advertising (Muehling and Kolbe 1998), and measuring the creativity of messages in radio ads (Abernethy, Gray and Rotfeld 1993). Since content analysis has been a popular and effective method for analyzing television, radio, and print advertising, it was deemed suitable for evaluating campaign Web sites as well.

Sample and Procedure

In the 2002 mid-term election, there were an estimated 405 incumbents and 592 challengers vying for open seats in the U.S. House of Representatives (Federal Election Commission 2002). The content analysis portion of this research examines the information posted on the 2002 campaign Web sites of 55 incumbents and 90 challengers (N=145) running for open House seats. It also compares data from the campaign sites to that from an additional sample of 118 official congressional (.gov) Web sites.

The units of analyses are the official campaign homepage and the official House homepage. The entire homepage was included in the analysis regardless of length, as were other relevant sections including biographies and issue positions. These sites were selected because they were the "official" campaign sites of the candidates and legislators. As such, they are relatively easy for visitors to find by typing simple cue words and phrases (e.g. "Barrett for Congress" for a campaign site, or "Representative Burr" for a government site) into search engines like

Yahoo or Google.

In selecting which **legislative** sites to analyze for this project, the author selected the sites of sitting House members who represented exactly the same states and districts as those analyzed in a separate content analysis conducted by Jarvis in 1996. The **campaign** sample was also based on Jarvis' legislative analysis; specifically, all major party candidates from the districts represented in the legislative sample who had a campaign site at the time the sites were saved were included in the study. Ultimately, only 45 of the 118 original House members in the legislative sample also appeared in the campaign sample, while the remaining 100 were new to the study. This discrepancy occurred for one of the following reasons: (1) the Representative was retiring, (2) the Representative elected not to run for another term; or (3) the Representative did not have a campaign site at the time the data was collected. An additional group of twenty legislative sites, selected using a random numbers table, were also examined to ensure that the sample used in the study was representative of the entire population of House sites. Few differences were found between the original sample and the randomly-selected group, thus further increasing the study's reliability.

Once the legislative and campaign sites were selected, each was accessed using a computer running the Windows 98 operating system with a high-speed cable Internet connection. Internet Explorer was used as the browser, and the sites

were saved in full using HTTrack Web Site Copier software. For backup purposes, the author also made printouts of each homepage. All of the legislative and campaign sites were saved in June and July 2002, roughly four to five months before the general election on November 5.

The demographics of the **legislative** sample closely mirrored those of the One Hundred Seventh Congress, which was in session at the time this study was conducted. Just as the House was comprised of eighty-six percent men, a majority of the official House sites (88%) represented male legislators. Similarly, while the House was made up of fifty-one percent Republicans, forty-eight percent Democrats, and one percent Independents, fifty-three percent of the legislators in the sample were Republicans, forty-six percent were Democrats, and one was an Independent[4]. The regions from which the legislators hailed were as follows: Midwest (31%), Northeast (17%), South (32%), and West (21%).

Demographics for the **campaign** sites followed a similar pattern. A majority of the candidates were male (86%), and fifty-seven percent belonged to the GOP, while forty-three percent represented the Democratic party. Additionally, there were almost twice as many challengers (62%) for each seat as incumbents (38%). The candidates represented the following geographic regions: Midwest (23%), Northeast (18%), South (39%), and West (20%).

Content analysis is defined by Krippendorf (1980, p. 21) as "a research

technique for making replicable and valid inferences from data to their context." This method was selected because it allows for the classification of items objectively and systematically, according to unambiguous rules and criteria. Content analysis also ranks high on external validity, as the findings are generalizable to other populations and/or social settings. Moreover, this technique is known as an effective tool for establishing correlation (see Riffe et al. 1998).

Several steps were involved in the content analytic process. First, simple characteristics of each politician were recorded to assess basic personal and political information. These demographic traits consisted of: name, gender, state/district number, party affiliation, incumbency, age, race, and region (the complete codebook and coding sheets can be found in the Appendix). Second, characteristics specific to the Web were noted. These features included total number of links on the homepage, as well as the presence (or non-presence) of text, graphics, color, and photos. Finally, measures for each of the dependent variables were coded. Frequencies were run on all values to determine the overall profile of the sites, while percentages and chi-square tests for significance were employed to illustrate their similarities and differences as discussed in Chapters Five and Six.

Coding categories for the sites were based upon a prior coding scheme

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[4] Results for the Independent legislator are not reported in this study due to the fact that only

developed by Jarvis (1996), whose comparison of 1995-96 congressional Web sites served as a starting point for this study. As was previously stated, since Jarvis' work concerned only the sites of elected officials, the coding scheme was modified by the author to include variables related specifically to campaign sites, and to the dissertation's five hypotheses.

A key methodological issue in content analysis is the uniformity of the interpretation and categorization of the items of interest (e.g. Web sites). The main concern is that the categorization is reliable, allowing coders to classify each item consistently. To address this issue, different methods of intercoder agreement have been developed and implemented over the years. Yet, as Lombard et al. (2002, p. 587) point out, "There are few standard and accessible guidelines available regarding the appropriate procedures to use to assess and report intercoder reliability, or software tools to calculate it." To determine the most appropriate method for this study, the author chose to conduct an informal survey of research published in the primary academic journal in the field of advertising, the Journal of Advertising (JOA).

Hughes and Garrett (1990) and Namjung et al. (1993) found that thirteen (60%) of the twenty-two content analyses published in the JOA from 1981 to 1990 used percentage agreement -- a method in which the ratio of coding agreements is divided by the total number of coding decisions. Likewise, in an

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Republicans and Democrats were included in the campaign sample.

independent assessment, the author found that thirteen (50%) of the twenty-six content analyses published in the JOA from 1991 to 2002 also used percentage agreement (a summary of these articles can be found in the Appendix). Though this method has been deemed inappropriate by some because it does not correct for chance (see Lombard et al. 2002), percentage agreement has been used in over half of the content analyses found in the JOA since 1981 and, as such, was deemed a safe and reliable measure for calculating intercoder agreement in this dissertation.

As was previously mentioned, though all sites in the study were first coded by the author, in an effort to increase reliability in the content analyses, two undergraduate students and one graduate student were trained as independent coders. The coders worked independently of one another, each on different sections of the project. All three coders followed the stated definitions of each Web site construct and tallied their occurrences as present or absent in a systematic manner.

Prior to beginning the campaign site coding process, the undergraduate students received three hours of training from the author, followed by an initial reliability check of several sites. With slight retraining for the variables of partisanship and political opposition, satisfactory levels of intercoder reliability were obtained. At that point, one undergraduate coder analyzed the first half of the campaign site variables, while the second coder analyzed the latter portion.

Most classifications were objective and categorical, and the intercoder reliabilities were expectedly high. Kassarjian (1977) notes that researchers should aim for coefficients of reliability above 85 percent; in the present study, the average rate of intercoder reliability with the author was .932 for the first coder and .928 for the second.

The third independent coder performed a different function. After an extensive training session, the legislative sites, which were originally coded in May 2001 by the author (see Jarvis and Wilkerson 2002), were re-examined by the coder to make sure that no major changes had occurred on the sites since the prior coding. Few major differences in the 2001 and 2002 legislative sites were reported (see Appendix for details).

Chapter 4: The Creative Minds Behind the Sites

If you're a voter and you're interested in learning about a candidate, you're going to log on to the Web. If you build a campaign site, you need to bring visitors there. You've got to advertise your Web site. You've got to list the site next to your logo, on your placards, on your commercials. While the campaign staff needs to be forward-thinking and proactive in coming up with ideas, Web design consultants **need to have a seat at the table** because a lot of times the members themselves don't think about this stuff. -- *Political Web design consultant D. Almacy, telephone interview, August 9, 2002.*

Candidates don't want to spend the time or effort on their sites and they don't want the bells and whistles; they want their sites to be an electronic brochure...Candidates have sites because they don't want to look old-fashioned. Basically, they know it's necessary, but they don't want to pay any money for it. That's what's sad. They can **get some college kid to build their site for a couple of boxes of pizza**, yet these same candidates **wouldn't let Uncle Harry film their campaign commercials**. -- *Political Web design consultant M. Johnson, telephone interview, August 8, 2002.*

I think we're only at the very beginning of the technology revolution in campaigns and in politics. I think, overall, the impact probably doubles from one election cycle to the next. However, integrating Web sites into campaigns is one of the things that candidates are doing the least well...Good campaigns are using this technology to win campaigns, but most campaigns just sit down and say, **"Oh. We need a campaign site."** -- *Political Web design consultant P. Noble, telephone interview, August 9, 2002.*

THE ROLE OF ADVERTISING CREATIVES ON THE WEB

Web sites are forecast to become an indispensable part of political campaigns at all levels of government in the United States. Many observers believe campaign sites are beneficial because they allow candidates to raise funds, recruit volunteers, and provide vast amounts of information to potential voters relatively quickly and inexpensively. They also add a unique dimension to campaigning that was unheard of before the arrival of the Internet and the Web. As Hall (1997, p. 97) explains, while a politician "might pause, smile, kiss a baby or say a few words, he'd never walk away from such an encounter knowing a person's address, her preferred news sources, annual income, musical tastes, credit history, driving record, and more."

The wide array of features available makes creating a campaign Web site an important, albeit complicated, task in that everything from fundraising tools to advertisements to chat rooms can be included on a site if a candidate so chooses. While some candidates use relatives, neighbors, or staff to sift through the mind-boggling list of possibilities, those who view Web sites as a potent weapon in the campaign arsenal typically seek the help of a Web design professional. At a time when many observers both in and outside the industry are predicting that campaign sites will become commonplace and, in fact, necessary, it is important that academics gain a deeper understanding of the mindset of the creatives who design them. As such, this chapter provides an insider's perspective on campaign

Web sites and the culture within which they are developed.

PRIOR RESEARCH ON ADVERTISING CREATIVES

The term "creative" is defined by Young (2000, p. 19) as "a heterogeneous group of advertising professionals--copywriters, art directors, producers, and even, in the age of the Internet--computer programmers." Besides the obvious duties of writing copy, designing logos, and choosing photography, creatives often serve as the catalyst for the "big ideas" on which the success or failure of advertising ultimately depends. Though creatives are central to the advertising industry, these individuals and the culture in which they work are often misunderstood by the outside world. Creatives, as Kover (1995, p. 604) notes, are known for viewing those "in the surrounding environment as potential enemies." Moreover, creatives often feel the need to defend their work "against account management, against their own creative department managers, and often in opposition to research findings and the urging of clients." Kover (1995, p. 604) calls this tug-of-war "a near-inevitable result of advertising that results from the dialogue process."

A minimal amount of research has focused on advertising creatives and their thought processes over the years (Zinkhan 1993). According to Reid, King, and DeLorme (1998), almost all of the studies conducted on the subject up to this

point can be categorized into four distinct but related categories: (1) studies of creative decision processes (Courtney 1971; Hirschman 1989; Kover 1995; Lavery 1993; Mondroski, Reid and Russell 1983; Moriarty and Vanden Bergh 1984; Solomon and Greenberg 1993; Taylor, Hoy and Haley 1996; Vanden Bergh, Reid and Schorin 1983; West 1993), (2) studies of individual characteristics and creative problem-solving abilities (Auer 1976; Klebba and Tierney 1995; Moriarty and Vanden Bergh 1984; Reid 1978; Reid and Rotfeld 1976; West 1993), (3) studies of organizational influences and ad creation (Holz, Ryans and Shanklin 1982; Tinkham, Lane and Leung 1987; Vanden Bergh, Smith and Wicks 1986; West 1993); and (4) studies of advertising education and creativity (Kendrick, Slayden and Broyles 1996; Otnes, Oviatt and Treise 1995; Otnes, Spooner and Triese 1993; Reid 1977; Robbs 1996; Vance 1982; Vanden Bergh 1984). More recently, Young (2000) examined the creative differences between advertising copywriters and art directors, while White and Smith (2001) studied whether advertising professionals judge creativity in the same way as the general public.

As was discussed in Chapter Two, advertising often serves to reinforce cultural values (see Schudson 1984), and many believe that campaign Web sites -- arguably the most modern type of political advertising -- are playing an increasingly larger role in the political and cultural landscape. For this reason, academic research that examines these sites as a cultural product is needed.

ADVERTISING CREATIVES AND CULTURE

No studies published to date have focused on the creative culture in which Web designers immerse themselves while developing political campaign sites -- a culture that primarily includes the designers, the candidates, and the campaign staffs who enlist their services. As was discussed in Chapter 1, our knowledge of political advertising is based largely on content analyses of ads and empirical effects studies rather than on examinations of the creative process itself. Further, though Rotzoll and Haefner (1990) assert that advertising must be considered in light of the cultural expectations set for it, our knowledge of the relationship between advertising creatives and the culture in which they create is minimal, perhaps because "culture" is an ambiguous concept that is somewhat difficult to define. Moreover, most studies on cultural systems have been conducted by anthropologists (Arensberg and Niehoff 1971; Bond 1987; Hall 1959; Hofstede 1980; Kahle 1983; Kluckhohn 1961; Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck 1961; Rokeach 1973) rather than advertisers and marketers. Nonetheless, as Taylor et al. (1996, p. 4) observe, "The thread that binds all study of culture is the assertion that culture is learned behavior constituting a complex whole that includes knowledge, beliefs, art, morals, law, and customs."

As was mentioned in the Methodology, McCracken (1986, p. 72) provides a framework for the structure and movement of the cultural meaning of consumer goods that can be related to this study of advertising Web creatives (see Figure

4.1). McCracken characterizes cultural meaning according to two terms: cultural categories (i.e. the fundamental coordinates that represent the basic distinctions a culture uses to divide up the ordinary world) and cultural principles (i.e. the values that determine how the ordinary world is organized, evaluated, and interpreted). Utilizing these concepts, he illustrates a process by which cultural meaning is transferred from the culturally constituted world to consumer goods, and eventually to the individual consumer. This study of advertising Web creatives speaks to the first stage of cultural meaning transfer, the creation of campaign Web sites as an instrument responsible for the movement of cultural meaning.

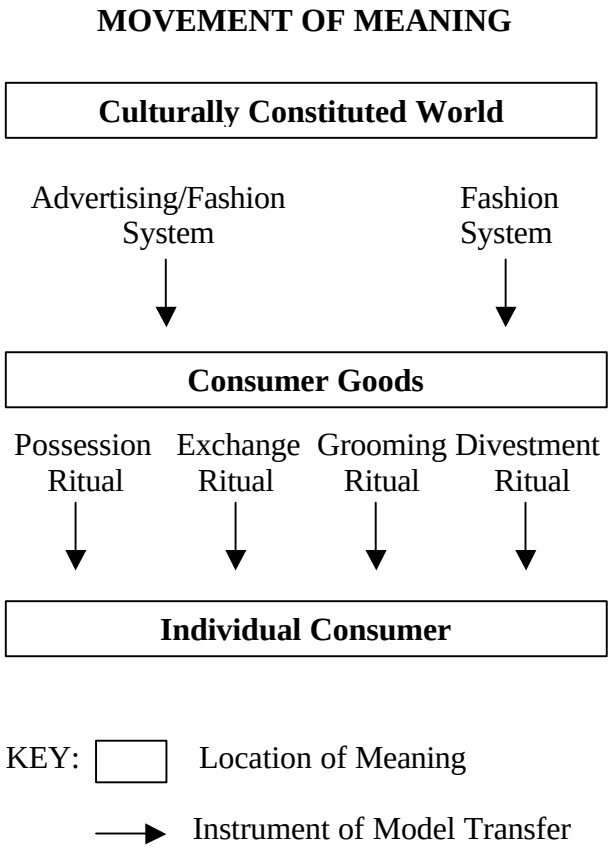

Figure 4.1: Model of Cultural Meaning Transfer (McCracken 1986)

This chapter qualitatively explores the mindset of political Web designers as they navigate the process of developing campaign sites. Drawing from McCracken (1986), the author sought to understand the cultural categories and principles that define advertising creativity on the Web as viewed by its creators.

Because advertising "expresses a culture's history, values, norms, and beliefs" (Taylor et al. 1996, p. 4), understanding the culture in which campaign Web sites are produced will reveal how politicians in the upper echelons of government are integrating -- or are *not* integrating -- Web sites into their daily lives. The interviews should also provide rich information about how campaign sites fit into today's political climate.

As is described in Chapter Three, thirteen Web design professionals were selected for the interviews. While thirteen is a modest number, the limited sample is acceptable since the designers are all looked upon as very accomplished in their profession, and are regarded as elites in the area (Dexter 1970).

FINDINGS

Four broad categories central to the creative culture of campaign Web site design emerged from the interviews: (1) development of site content, (2) site maintenance, (3) site features and functions; and (4) site integration. The next several sections describe these categories in detail, and are followed by a discussion of three additional areas of interest. The chapter concludes with an examination of the implications of the interview findings.

Development of Site Content

One of the first tasks political Web designers face is the development of Web site content. In the world of campaign site design, there are two standard options: ready-made templates and custom designs. All but one of the interviewees in the study stated that they provided their clients with personalized sites rather than cookie-cutter templates, though a few participants offered both.

A small number of designers in the sample primarily used content provided by the campaigns, and most of the individuals in this group believed that the campaigns they worked for supplied them with enough ready-made information to result in a satisfactory site.

> Many candidates provide content because your Web site, campaign literature, ads, etcetera, should all have a similar message and a similar look. If the campaign already has a complete marketing campaign in print, [our company] will use that as a base for the Web site. The larger campaigns often send ready-made packages. I7

> We offer a Web site creation and content management system that basically provides the container that [candidates] put their information into. We don't come up with the actual content, but we make sure the message gets across and we also assist with design. The politicians like it because we have over 200 templates, or we'll custom design one. Most campaigns go for the custom design because they have their own particular color schemes and content needs. The candidate has absolute freedom to determine the content, though we will help candidates to the extent that we don't want them to hurt themselves. I2

Most designers in the study, however, expressed dissatisfaction with this type of low-level creative involvement. This group believed that a truly collaborative effort between the design firm and the candidate produced the best results. Often, the phrase "team approach" or "team effort" was used to describe the process:

> Usually, the text and photos are provided by the campaign. The look and feel of the site is more of a collaborative process. Everyone works together. I3
>
> Typically, the campaign manager will draft most of the material for the site, but they often ask [our agency] for advice during the process. Larger campaigns may even hire an Internet consultant to help develop content. Regardless, the campaign and/or candidate always has the final say. I4
>
> Deciding on the content of a campaign site usually entails a team approach...Candidates winning votes is the bottom line. I5
>
> Determining the content of a campaign site is a team effort; fifty to sixty percent is based on what the campaign says it needs, thirty to forty percent is [the design company's] creative input, and the remaining percentage is a collaboration where both sides try to find better ways to do what they need to do. I8
>
> I typically sit down with the candidate or campaign staff and listen to what they'd like the Web site to do. Then, I formulate a plan...I have a lot of creative freedom. I11

In short, while a few of the designers preferred to let the candidate and campaign handle the development of site content, most expressed a desire for greater creative control, and several indicated that their creative abilities were

significantly affected by how much -- or how little -- they were involved in the creative process. As one agency principal noted, "I'm hoping in the future to get in earlier in the [design] process because the things candidates tend to give me don't translate well onto the Web[5]." Additionally, a solid working relationship with the candidate/campaign was cited as a must for maintaining a healthy culture within which to create.

While creative differences seemed to factor heavily in the quality of campaign site design, the cost of building a site was also an issue, especially for challengers. One agency president stated that her firm's system of billing by the hour often prompted candidates to provide their own Web site materials; conversely, a majority of the designers who charged flat fees felt that their services were extensively used by clients. When asked the cost of a typical congressional site, some respondents remained mum; others provided estimates ranging from as little as $3,000 to in excess of $60,000.

Site Maintenance

The second area of discussion to emerge from the interviews involved campaign site maintenance; that is, the day-to-day updating and editing of a site. In contrast to their feelings on Web site design, almost all of the participants

[5] I6.

agreed that letting the campaign perform simple tasks such as adding press releases and updating events calendars was the best practice. At least one designer even offered software through which candidates could log in from anywhere in the world to make simultaneous changes to their sites.

This division of duties between designer and candidate was viewed as the most timely and cost-efficient method because, as one agency president explained, "The cost of paying a professional to fully maintain a site is a disincentive to campaigns, so that's a bad way to arrange it[6]." Even the designers who did not yet offer campaigns the tools and training needed to handle simple site maintenance indicated that they were moving in that direction because in addition to the cost savings, as one interviewee observed, "There are more web-savvy people around. Even teenage volunteers are very knowledgeable...People are learning that it's not rocket science[7]."

In sum, opinions varied as to how much involvement the Web designers thought was appropriate in terms of site maintenance; while a few preferred to provide site updates on a regular basis, the majority believed that the most satisfactory approach was to train campaigns to maintain their own sites. All of the individuals, however, indicated that as the technology gets simpler, the responsibility of site maintenance will increasingly be placed in the hands of campaigns, giving design consultants more time to focus on creative matters.

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[6] I3.

Most Important Site Function

The third area of significance derived from the interviews was campaign site functionality. Asking each participant what they believed to be the most important task of a campaign site generated a wide variety of responses; some were specific to the designers' feelings, while others reflected the beliefs of candidates. Frequently, as is often the case in offline advertising (Kover 1995), the views of the two parties were at odds.

Site Functions Most Important to Designers

Overall, two campaign site functions were mentioned as equally important from the designers' perspective: online fundraising and communication capabilities. Following, each feature is described in further detail.

Online Fundraising. While the Internet's success in raising campaign funds was limited in 1996 (the Dole campaign raised roughly $100,000 and the Clinton campaign even less), there was a notable increase in online contributions during the 1998 election season (Friedly 1998). The ability to take online donations was viewed by all of the interviewees as crucial to a campaign's success:

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[7] I5.

> Fundraising is the most important feature, but candidates have had moderate to good success, down to no success at all in raising funds online...It depends on the candidate's ability to place the site at the forefront rather than just adding a contribution feature to the site...Candidates have to promote the site often, mentioning it in every speech and at every fundraiser for online fundraising to work. I8
>
> Particularly with the changes in the contribution laws, the ability to reach as many potential constituents and get those $100, $200, and $300 contributions will become incredibly important. I7
> The ability to take contributions is essential, but this tool is often used ineffectively by candidates. I2
>
> It's pointless to put up a site without online fundraising. I4

Though the designers viewed online fundraising an essential element of an effective campaign site, they also agreed that most candidates don't currently use this feature to the fullest. However, many predicted that the situation would change in light of the 2001 passing of the McCain-Feingold campaign reform bill, which calls for a ban on soft money and raises individual contribution limits from $1,000 to $2,000. The widespread implications of this bill, they believe, will be an eye-opener for candidates not yet involved in online fundraising.

Communication Capabilities. Trent and Friedenberg (1995, p. 301) propose that communication is "the heart of the modern political campaign." Goldenberg and Traugott (1984) further assert that articulating political stances and ideas to citizens in an effort to glean votes is the main goal of candidates during elections.

To this end, the interviewees deemed communication with site visitors as crucial to a campaign's success, and *at least as important* as online fundraising.

> A site needs to get the candidate's message out. You hit people in the face with who you are and what you are. You don't want to be vague or fuzzy. I11

> A campaign site's main purpose is to communicate with activists -- a candidate's small, but active, group of supporters...A whole new world of things will become practical and cost-effective when we're actually communicating with voters. I3

> The product that you're selling is the candidate. You want to get your message out to voters who will vote for you and you want to create voters who will vote for you. I5

> Communication with site users is the most important function of a campaign site. This entails actual text, comparative issue positions, and some interactive features related to campaigns. In my opinion, volunteer coordination and fundraising are not as important [as communication]. I8

The opportunities campaign sites provide for communication with online visitors appeared in many of the interview transcripts. Though the participants sometimes disagreed as to who the primary audience is at this point in time -- activists, casual supporters, undecided voters, or journalists -- all believed that communication is, and will continue to be, an extremely important function of campaign sites.

In fact, though often overlooked by candidates, many consultants cited e-mail as *the most significant communication medium* of the future. More

specifically, they praised the capabilities of the "e-mail updates" feature, an innovation that allows campaigns to collect the e-mail addresses of supporters, then send them regular updates of events, news releases, and other campaign information. Stressed one participant, "It's all about e-mail. It's more about e-mail than your Web site. I try to structure sites that allow people to readily offer up their e-mail addresses so they feel like they're a part of the campaign...and to get them to push more people to the Web site[8]." When asked if people enjoy receiving e-mail updates from campaigns, the same designer replied enthusiastically, "Yes! Dozens and dozens of people a day sign up. People want to be informed[9]." Another agency owner added, "The e-mail update function is the most important because it allows people to get constant information...They only have to be active once, then they become passive participants[10]."

A related and equally significant communication feature noted by several designers was a site's ability to mobilize supporters by providing interested visitors with the tools to send information about the candidate to friends and family members. Importantly, most participants believed that this type of information-sharing provides more credibility than televised campaign advertisements or stump speeches, since Web visitors are seeking out the information themselves rather than having it forced upon them. As one design

[8] I10.
[9] I4.
[10] I9.

firm principal explained, "On television, often we're being fed phony information from slick politicians [he uses his own state's governor as an example]. On the other hand, the ability to share information with my neighbor...the underground buzz...grass roots...lets your users become your marketers[11]."

Finally, the ability to recruit online volunteers was mentioned by several interviewees as an important communication function. One designer who was particularly excited about this feature noted that campaign sites offer candidates the ability to quickly and inexpensively mobilize supporters by building "a volunteer army[12]." Another participant stated, "After e-mail, soliciting volunteers is the second-most important function a site can perform[13]."

Site Function Most Important to Candidates

The previous section recounts the *designers*' opinions as to which functions they believe are most essential when creating a campaign site; namely, online fundraising, e-mail, and volunteer solicitation capabilities. Interestingly, but perhaps not surprisingly, when the interviewees were asked which features *candidates* found most important, it was found that online fundraising, and only online fundraising, currently takes top priority in the minds of candidates.

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[11] I1.
[12] I6.

Online Fundraising. Though other site features were mentioned on occasion, most designers indicated that the most popular feature (and sometimes, the only feature) requested by candidates was the ability to solicit online contributions. One interviewee exclaimed, "John McCain's fundraising success on his campaign site led many candidates to think 'Wow! What am I missing if I don't have online fundraising[14]?'" Another agreed, adding, "Candidates all want to take donations online -- especially after McCain...It's largely e-mail based fundraising that allowed [McCain] to stay in the race as late as he did[15]." One designer even suggested that many candidates construct campaign sites with the exclusive goal of soliciting contributions, stating, "A lot of candidates initially approach the campaign site as solely a fundraising vehicle, then come around to realizing it's also a great way to provide information[16]."

Still, most of the interviewees emphasized that online fundraising could only be successful if candidates posted informative and creative Web sites, *and* if those sites were regularly promoted in other campaign media. While a few candidates have proven that they understand this concept (consider the Dole story at the beginning of Chapter 1), it was the consultants' belief that most candidates have not yet caught on. Further, persuading candidates to advertise their Web sites

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[13] I9.
[14] I4.
[15] I6.

often proved problematic for the designers. As one explained, "Even though I try to convince candidates to put their Web address on every piece of literature they send out, it's still very difficult to convince candidates to put Web addresses even on the bottom of their yard signs. You wouldn't believe how hard it is[17]." This attitude, they believe, will have to change if candidates wish to reap the full benefits of online fundraising.

Site Integration

The preceding statement raises the question of whether or not candidates view Web sites as an integral part of their campaigns -- the fourth theme to arise from the interview transcripts. Most respondents agreed with Schneider (2000) that candidates do not yet view campaign sites with the same significance that they do television ads; in fact, one agency president stated that "ninety-plus percent" of his clients had not yet incorporated Web sites into their political campaigns[18]. The participants expressed both frustration and bewilderment at candidates' lackadaisical attitudes toward campaign sites, particularly since the designers themselves felt that Web sites would become paramount to campaigns in the future. As for how this predicament will be resolved, a majority of the

[16] I4.
[17] I6.

consultants believe there is currently a generational gap in the acknowledgment of campaign sites as a legitimate and effective campaign communication tool. Many also think that competition, or a lack thereof, plays a major role, since the incumbent advantage seems to figure so prominently into most congressional races (see Abramowitz 2000). Thus, their hope is that as younger politicians take office, and if the incumbent advantage somehow diminishes, the Web will be accepted more fully as a campaign advertising medium:

> Younger members running for office are definitely embracing the Web. It was never a part of the older incumbents' world. They're incumbents. They don't need it. They're not interested. However, as younger people start to run, they'll all be computer literate and they'll all have phenomenal Web sites. I can imagine these people doing all kinds of things. I11
>
> There is definitely a generational shift...The people who get it use the Web as a core part of their campaigns. The generation still in charge is still the baby boomers who are not yet knowledgeable of the power of this medium. I2
>
> The more hotly contested the race is, the better the sites are likely to be. I3
>
> It's going to take a whole new generation of candidates under the age of forty before this thing takes off. Most campaigns don't have a grasp of this technology. They don't feel like it's worth it...The Internet is not going to do what it can do for political campaigns until the old way of thinking is gone and a new generation of candidates comes to the forefront. Old-time political consultants who have been at it for twenty-five years are hesitant because they haven't figured out how to make money on the Internet. I10

[18] I8.

> You have a lot of members in Congress who have been in for fifty years [sites John Dingle as an example] who say, "I've been elected for the past umpteen years, I've been serving my constituents, and a Web site is not something that I want to sink $10,000 into." We target a lot of freshman Congresspersons because they tend to be younger, to understand the Internet. And, they have staff that understands the Internet. I13

Despite generational differences and a frequent lack of legitimate competition, political observers have spent the last several years predicting that the "upcoming election cycle" or the "next presidential election" will be the one in which the Web will irreversibly transform the political landscape (see Johnson, Braima and Sothirajah 1999). Yet even the most experienced forecasters have been proven incorrect. Weise (2000, p. 37) calls this pattern the "Christmas effect," comparing it to the tendency of retailers and journalists to excitedly predict that, "This is the holiday shopping season electronic commerce will really break through!" Perhaps this is the reason many of the designers, when asked when they expect to see a change in candidates' attitudes toward campaign sites, were hesitant to pinpoint an exact election cycle or year. On the other hand, a few of the respondents offered educated guesses. One agency president stated, "Everyone expected that 2002 would be a watershed for everything and that didn't happen...Things will be getting a lot more high-tech and candidates will be a lot more dedicated in 2004[19]." Another predicted that campaign sites would become

[19] I4.

necessary "maybe in 2004 or 2006[20]."

Some consultants pointed to events, rather than exact dates, that they believed would propel Web sites into the forefront of campaign communication. One agency principal felt that "generating more interest will require a presidential campaign[21]." Another saw online voting as the catalyst, stating, "When online voting arrives...that will make Web sites the most important part of the campaign...I think that ballots will have links to relevant Web sites where you're only a few clicks away from a huge amount of information that you just don't have at this point [with ballot box voting][22]." In any case, all of the designers expressed certainty that the Web would become a permanent campaign fixture, and most believed that it would be sooner rather than later.

Bimber (1997) suggests that just as television exerted little influence on the political process until the 1960s and 1970s, even though sets began infiltrating American homes in the 1940s, it may take a decade or more for the Internet to meet the grand expectations of many observers. Scholars and others will have to wait and see whether Bimber's rather conservative theory or the Web designers' more optimistic predictions about campaigns and the Web are correct.

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[20] I1.
[21] I8.
[22] I6.

ADDITIONAL AREAS OF INTEREST

While the preceding four areas encompassed the majority of the interview findings and appeared to have the most impact on the creative process, three additional topics yielded information the author found enlightening: (1) most effective sites, (2) site features to avoid; and (3) the future role of the Web in political campaigns.

Most Effective Sites

While there is no *one* answer to the question of what constitutes the perfect political campaign site, many have proposed worthwhile ideas. Max Fose (2002), Internet manager for John McCain's 2000 presidential campaign, suggests that a Web site is effective so long as the candidate is: (1) educating the voter, (2) getting people involved, (3) soliciting campaign contributions, (4) lobbying for a cause; and (5) getting people out to vote. Though the interviewees felt that many candidates have been slow to address these issues, and most agreed with Weise, (2000, p. 38) who calls today's campaign sites, "almost uniformly dull, seldom more than static versions of the brochures that will fill mailboxes come October," there were some notable exceptions. When participants were asked which sites they were most proud of, all readily offered at least one or two examples, along

with reasons as to why those sites were particularly effective. During these discussions, the interviewees often mentioned two distinct factors: specific sites features and the attitude of the candidate and campaign staff.

Two prominent examples mentioned were the 2000 Bill Bradley for President site and George W. Bush's 2000 campaign site:

> I'm most proud of the Bill Bradley site because it was so effective for the organization...It raised almost $2 million for the campaign, and was a significant way to communicate with supporters and activists. I3

> I'm most proud of the George W. Bush campaign site...It's the one that we broke the most ground on. The site was a great political machine that we'll be able to plug in when Bush runs for re-election. I13

Other sites noted for their outstanding features included the 2002 congressional campaign sites for challenging House candidates Mike Michaud (D-ME) and Mark Shriver (D-MD):

> I believe the Michaud for Congress site is the most feature-rich in the history of candidate Web sites for congressional races. The site features include an online town hall forum that has precipitated amazing conversations, a feature for blind users, screensavers, detailed district maps, and a Palm Pilot version of the site. I9

> The Mark Shriver congressional campaign site boasts lots of neat features, including compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act and a section in Spanish. I4

Just as important as site functionality was the cooperation and attitude of the candidate and campaign staff. One consultant found working with the Bush campaign to be an ideal situation. He explained, "As far as a client who is willing to grasp the Internet and take it to the next level, George W. Bush was willing to do that...more than any campaign we worked with...The Bush people came up with a lot of visionary, forward-thinking ideas[23]." The effectiveness of a team approach was echoed in other sentiments as well. As one designer stated, "The Michaud campaign believed in me to create something dynamic...They said 'do whatever you want[24].'" Another called his relationship with the campaigns of Rep. Rod Blagojevich (D-IL) and challenging gubernatorial candidate Andrew Cuomo (D-NY) "tremendous partnerships," noting that both candidates "understand the power of this medium[25]." One respondent pointed to the site of an unnamed state Senate candidate as his favorite because the candidate was "really innovative and actively involved in the planning[26]." The respondent found this approach refreshing due to the fact that, as he put it, "Sometimes all we'll get is an envelope full of campaign literature and, it's like, 'here - turn this into something.'"

In sum, as has been mentioned several times throughout this chapter, the designers indicated that the most successful campaign sites, and the best culture in which to create, are a result of designers and candidates working hand-in-hand to

[23] I13.
[24] I9.
[25] I2.

reach an established set of goals. Moreover, they suggest that if a candidate is imaginative, progressive, and open to new ideas, all parties involved are likely to be happier with the process and with the final product.

Site Features to Avoid

When the designers were asked what, if anything, they would avoid posting on a campaign site, some respondents focused on specific features, while others were more philosophical. One agency president advises his clients not to use identifying cookies, stating that he senses a "privacy pushback" among citizens. He added, "We think in politics that's a dangerous thing to do...you have the potential for backlash[27]." Another individual cautions her clients against using open-ended communication tools such as billboards and chat rooms, because she believes these features provide "an opportunity for your opponent to take over your site[28]." Still another designer wary of the opposition stated that he counsels his clients to avoid posting events calendars because "not only are candidates pretty much committed to an event once it's posted...Your opponent knows everything you're doing[29]." Only one consultant replied, "There's nothing I

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[26] I7.
[27] I2.
[28] I3.
[29] I5.

wouldn't put on a campaign Web site[30]." Additional responses included: "negative things about the other candidate[31]," "features that might make the site load too slowly[32]," and "content that is out of date[33]."

One participant focused on another issue altogether, insisting, "Under construction is a big no-no. You don't ever link to a section that doesn't exist[34]." Interestingly, this designer compared the situation to "going to a fast food restaurant and seeing ads for a new, great food, going to the counter and asking for it, and then hearing 'Actually, that won't be available until next month.'"

In sum, the Web designers were largely apprehensive about allowing candidates to post information that might be used in a negative fashion by opponents, or that could be misunderstood or misconstrued by citizens or members of the media, particularly in a forum where politicians are not able to defend themselves as they could in a debate or a press conference. As later chapters will reveal, it appears that most candidates agree with this notion.

Future Role of the Web in Political Campaigns

Toward the end of each interview, the Web designers were asked for their

[30] I8.
[31] I6.
[32] I5.
[33] I8.

parting thoughts on the issue of political campaigns and the Web. This question was purposefully broad and open-ended in hopes that the author would be able to capture any significant information not touched upon during the interviews. The query resulted in a number of compelling responses, most having to do with the future of online political campaigns:

> The Web will change the way in which we elect our public officials...We will be able to share information in this space in a way that we don't do now at dinner parties...I am passionate about bringing this about sooner rather than later...We can't be moving fast enough into this space. I6
>
> The [candidates] who integrate the Internet as part of their overall campaign strategy will be most successful...There's a lot of power in the Internet that is yet to be unleashed. I1
>
> This is a remarkably powerful tool for political campaigns in the future. Campaign sites as a part of an integrated campaign will do nothing but grow and will become much more important in the future...This generation of voters are viewers--they're not readers. I2
>
> Candidates need to get more aggressive about how they use this medium. There will come a time when this could be a deciding factor in an election. Candidates view the Internet as merely a way to put more money into their bank accounts so they can run more television ads. They need to change that mindset. I8
>
> One of the reasons the Internet will be so important long-term...It's very difficult for people who want to be educated to learn about campaigns from a 10- to 15-second sound bite. I7

[34] I13.

Again, all of the interviewees were adamant that Web sites would become central to the political campaigns of the future. Moreover, most strongly believe that the Web will eventually change the way we view candidates, campaigns, and politics in general.

IMPLICATIONS

The purpose of this chapter was to explore the culture of campaign site creation through the eyes of political Web design professionals. The interview findings presented in this chapter have several implications for politicians, citizens, and advertising creatives in all mediums. They also provide suggestions for future research, which are discussed in the concluding chapter of this dissertation.

As was indicated in the opening comments and throughout this chapter, the well-documented stresses that exist between offline advertising creatives and their clients (see Kover, James and Sonner 1997) are also present in the world of political Web design. Based upon the interview data, it appears that the process of developing a campaign site is often a tug-of-war between Web consultants and candidates that leaves many designers feeling the need for more creative input or,

as one designer stated, "a seat at the table.[35]" It also seems that all parties involved in the creative process would benefit from utilizing the "team approach[36]" mentioned by several of the interviewees. Ideally, in taking this approach, candidates would carefully and clearly specify their campaign objectives, while designers would work thoughtfully to meet the candidates' goals and construct their Web sites accordingly.

In a related matter, the interviews revealed that political sites are still being held on the back burners of most campaigns, much to the chagrin of the consultants. Put simply, it seems that candidates, at least at this point in time, think of campaign sites as more of an afterthought than an absolute. One agency principal summarized it this way:

> I believe that at this point in time, candidates have sites because they have to. The level of interest with campaigns is not where I'd like to see it. It's not where I expected it to be...By and large, candidates don't devote resources to this. Most candidates recognize you need to have [a site], but it's still kind of on the periphery...There are only a few anecdotes of candidates who have fully integrated this into their campaigns. I8

Based upon these findings, it seems there are at least four possible reasons for candidates' hesitancy to rely on campaign Web sites in the same capacity they

[35] I13.
[36] I5.

do television advertising. These reasons, which will continue to surface throughout this dissertation, are: control, resources, generational differences, and competition.

Control. First is the issue of control; politicians have always been reluctant to share information and, as such, it seems logical that candidates would be averse to using a medium in which the information they post can, as was mentioned by several of the interviewees, be used to the advantage of the opposition. This is an interesting predicament, because while the Web allows candidates to quickly and easily post helpful items such as contact information and events calendars, this same technology also facilitates pressure for candidates to post other types of information, such as contributions and campaign expenditures, that they might not be so eager to divulge. While this sensitive data has always been available to the public, in the not-so-distant past it was much more difficult to obtain. That being said, however, it seems that if true online democracy is to take place, candidates must learn to accept the benefits of technology along with the drawbacks.

Resources. The second reason candidates have yet to embrace the Web as a campaign medium may have to do with resources -- another issue that was often brought up in the interviews. Though building a viable campaign site is a relatively inexpensive prospect when compared to the cost of producing and

airing televised ads, it appears that candidates with limited resources prefer simple, inexpensive campaign sites created by friends, family, or campaign volunteers to the more costly sites offered by Web design professionals. The issue of resources is likely to be of particular concern to challengers, who often enter congressional races under-funded, unrecognized, and inexperienced. While most challengers are likely concerned with saving money, they may also be more interested in investing in push mediums like television that can get their messages out to the undecided masses, rather than in pull mediums like the Internet, which tend to draw in those who are already supporters.

Generational Differences and Competition. Finally, many of the interviewees insisted that the Web has not yet become a mainstream campaign medium because it is not currently embraced by older politicians *or* by those in less competitive races. Thus, many believe that Web sites will play an increasingly prominent role in political campaigns as younger, less established candidates run for office. While there is little doubt that younger politicians are generally more in touch with computer and Internet technology than their more senior colleagues, it is uncertain whether the Web will replace traditional television advertising, even as more tech-savvy men and women take office, and even if the incumbent advantage diminishes. At most, it seems likely that the Web will be given a larger complementary role within campaigns, rather than a primary one. For instance,

candidates might run ads specifically directing viewers to their sites, as George W. Bush did in 2000, or they might choose to mention their sites more often in speeches and debates, as was the case with John McCain in 2000 and Bob Dole in 1996.

Additionally, as many interviewees predicted, candidates may begin to recognize e-mail as an important internal campaign tool, deeming it useful for such tasks as targeting undecided voters, organizing activists, and soliciting contributions. As was already noted, the success of the McCain presidential campaign in raising money and recruiting volunteers online has focused much candidate attention on the mobilizing power of the Web. And more recently, Democratic Committee Chair Terry McAuliffe told the Washington Post that his party would adopt the highly successful 2002 Republican mid-term election strategy of supplementing television ads with localized messages sent via e-mail or direct mail to voters. In fact, the DNC is said to be greatly increasing its e-mail capabilities and anticipates being able to send 10 million messages per week by 2004 (Balz 2003).

As to what the future holds for campaigns in cyberspace, one agency president theorized that as these issues of control, cost, generational differences, and competition are resolved, "There will come a time when this could be a deciding factor in an election[37]." This comment brings about several intriguing

[37] I8.

questions. Why do Web designers, as well as many academics and journalists, think the current situation will change, and what makes these individuals so certain? Further, what is the role of creatives in the campaign design process? Are they simply trying to help reluctant politicians along or are they, like so many other types of advertisers, attempting to create a need for their product? In other words, is this the rhetoric of an industry just trying to make a buck, or of an industry relying on the past success of mediums like television?

Of course, only through history will the answers to questions such as these be revealed. In the meantime, this chapter has at least shed some light on the creative culture of campaign Web site design as experienced by those who are immersed in it. The study has also, hopefully, provided an illustration of how cultural research can make a unique contribution to the advertising literature.

Chapter 5: Information, Creativity, and Technology on Congressional Sites

> Those on Capitol Hill today who **still think Yahoo is what you call your opponent**, who hate e-mail because it means more constituent views to answer, or who would rather gripe about the Internet than understand it, risk being swept away by convergence...Fearing technology never stops it. Taming technology starts with welcoming it. -- *Bailey, D. (2002, p. 87). Harvard International Journal for Press/Politics, 5.*

> The Internet can be programmed to mimic all the other instruments in the campaign orchestra, from the television to the window sign. But **no one really knows what to do with the baton**. -- *Cornfield, M. (2001, p. 41). Campaigns & Elections.*

> With so many Americans regularly using the Internet at home, work, and school, it seems unusual that most campaigns haven't created deeper, more robust Web sites to reach their constituents. **Smart politicians who understand the Internet will have a real edge** over their competition. -- *Bivings, G. (in Theodorou 2002, p. 1). U.S. Newswire.*

The comments above reflect a theme found in the sentiments of many political strategists: the Web may become a considerable force in politics and, as a campaign medium, it cannot be overlooked. A campaign Web site, they believe, can transform curious visitors into active supporters, and can provide potential voters with an abundance of important information. A Web site can also serve as

an easily accessible "campaign office" that stays open twenty-four hours per day, seven days per week at a minimal cost. With this in mind, it would seem that any candidate with a computer, a mouse, and a few thousand dollars would leap at the opportunity to build a top-notch Web site. As the comments by the Web design consultants interviewed in Chapter Four indicate, however, many candidates are not taking advantage of the benefits that the Internet and the Web have to offer.

The following two chapters present findings from a content analysis undertaken to assess the Web sites of candidates running for the U.S. House of Representatives during the 2002 election season. Information from the campaign sites is also compared with data collected by the author in a separate content analysis of legislative sites (Jarvis and Wilkerson 2002) to determine whether candidates or House members are more effectively selling themselves online. Occasionally, relevant comments from the Web design interviewees are offered for comparison purposes.

In the current chapter, the author addresses the study's first three hypotheses by examining the Web site variables of information, creativity, and technological innovation. Chapter Six focuses on the last two hypotheses, exploring the areas of online partisan content and political opposition. While not mentioned in the hypotheses, online political accessibility is also discussed. This approach was taken because the sites were fairly similar in terms of the first three variables, while for the remaining variables the results were markedly different.

PRACTICES OF CANDIDATES AND LEGISLATORS

At their most basic level, political campaigns, of which Web sites are now a part, are organized efforts to inform, persuade, and mobilize citizens. According to Hart (2000, p. 230), "an ideal political campaign invigorates the nation." Hart further asserts that campaigns have a tendency to reengage the public, discourage Beltway language, and encourage creativity. Popkin (1991, p. 8) concurs, stating, "Campaigns are able to reach people and involve them in the election." Popkin reminds us that the term *campaign* is rooted in the French word for "open country"-- a fitting phrase since campaigns, as he notes, "bring politicians out of the capital and into the open country." This practice, it seems, occurs in campaigns ranging from small, local races to those at the congressional and presidential level.

While candidates tend to stay out among the people, legislators are known for their preference to remain within the isolated confines of the Capitol. In fact, though Kernell (1997, p. 2) proposes that the modern president advances his personae and policies by going over the heads of Congress and "appealing to the American public for support," legislators often debate policy and make decisions without the input (and interference) of the citizens who elect them. As Ruskin (as cited in Ault and Jones 1999, ¶ 6) states, "Some congressional offices just want to plug their ears and slam the door shut." Siegelmen (as cited in Turner 2001, ¶ 8) makes a similar observation, noting, "Many legislators are known for making

deals behind closed doors with lobbyists and special interest groups." Further, White (2001, p. 1) proposes that while political issues are ideally debated in the open, the public more often than not receives only watered-down, secondhand information. He claims, "Very few have access to information, input into the choices being considered, and influence over the decisions."

As was briefly described in Chapter Three, due to the public nature of campaigns, the author theorized that candidates would put forth greater energy and effort in the construction of their Web sites than legislators. As such, in constructing the first three hypotheses for this study, it was assumed that campaign sites would naturally be more information-rich, more creative, and more technologically innovative than the official government sites of U.S. House members. The bulk of this chapter outlines the findings for each of these three variables, while interpretations of the findings are discussed at the end of the chapter.

INFORMATION CONTENT ON CAMPAIGN AND LEGISLATIVE WEB SITES

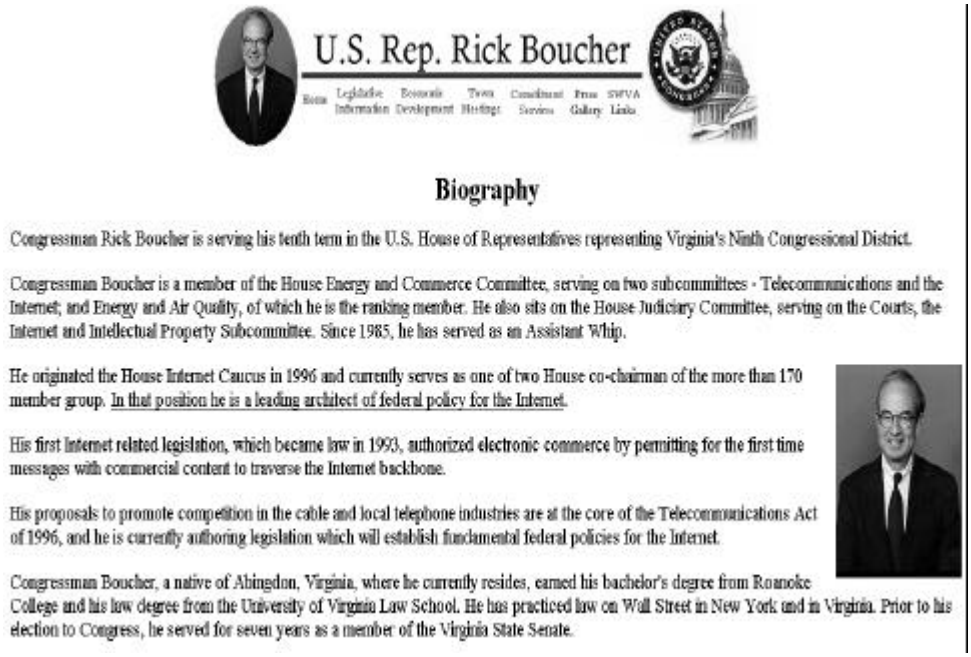
The first hypothesis predicted that House candidates would share more information on their campaign sites than would legislators on their official government sites. This prediction seemed appropriate since the literature indicates

that campaigns are largely meant to provide voters with the information they need to make educated decisions at the polls (see Popkin 1991). Moreover, Sweeney (as cited in Thurber and Nelson 1995, p. 27) claims that providing voters with information should be the primary focus of campaigns. He states, "Personal values or belief systems and personal history are vital bits of information people use to make decisions about other people."

Given these facts, it was assumed that candidates would be eager to share information about themselves and their political beliefs on the practically unlimited space the Web provides. The first hypothesis, however, was not supported by the data. Basic frequencies showed that in seven of the eight relevant categories related to information, legislators posted slightly more content overall than candidates. There were significant differences between the groups with respect to only two values, with legislators greatly outperforming candidates in the areas of *basic issues* and *press releases* (see Table 5.1). The eight relevant (i.e. applicable) categories that comprised the information variable included: biographies, contact information, district information/maps, basic issues, controversial issues, press releases, privacy statements, and notice of when the site had last been updated. Each variable is explained in further detail in the subsequent paragraphs (a complete description can be found in the Appendix).

Biographies were the first area examined for the variable of information. As Jalonick (2001, p. 40) points out, biographies are a "key strategic element" of

political sites because they can disseminate information to a politician's base, build confidence in constituents, supply facts to the media, and provide a personal touch. Results of the content analysis showed that 98 percent of House members posted a biography, as did 94 percent of candidates. However, the majority of biographies from both groups were considered by the author and the independent coders to be largely standardized and impersonal. To borrow an expression from Campaigns & Elections editor Ron Faucheux (1998, p. 7), the biographies in this sample were often "as inspiring as a toaster manual and as expressive as grand jury testimony." The following biography from the legislative site of Congressman Rick Boucher (D-VA) is typical:



U.S. Rep. Rick Boucher

Home | Legislative Information | Research Development | Town Meetings | Constituent Services | Press Gallery | SWVA Links

Biography

Congressman Rick Boucher is serving his tenth term in the U.S. House of Representatives representing Virginia's Ninth Congressional District.

Congressman Boucher is a member of the House Energy and Commerce Committee, serving on two subcommittees - Telecommunications and the Internet; and Energy and Air Quality, of which he is the ranking member. He also sits on the House Judiciary Committee, serving on the Courts, the Internet and Intellectual Property Subcommittee. Since 1985, he has served as an Assistant Whip.

He originated the House Internet Caucus in 1996 and currently serves as one of two House co-chairman of the more than 170 member group. In that position he is a leading architect of federal policy for the Internet.

His first Internet related legislation, which became law in 1993, authorized electronic commerce by permitting for the first time messages with commercial content to traverse the Internet backbone.

His proposals to promote competition in the cable and local telephone industries are at the core of the Telecommunications Act of 1996, and he is currently authoring legislation which will establish fundamental federal policies for the Internet.

Congressman Boucher, a native of Abingdon, Virginia, where he currently resides, earned his bachelor's degree from Roanoke College and his law degree from the University of Virginia Law School. He has practiced law on Wall Street in New York and in Virginia. Prior to his election to Congress, he served for seven years as a member of the Virginia State Senate.

Illustration 5.1: Biography from the site of Rep. Rick Boucher (D-VA).

Reading Boucher's biography leaves one with the impression that the legislator has no interests outside of politics. A description of Boucher's family, a series of snapshots, or an explanation of the congressman's hobbies would help visitors get to know Boucher on a more personal level. This type of rich, narrative information would also provide an element of warmth that is often found on the campaign trail but is lacking on the Web.

The next area measured for the information variable was *contact information*. Almost all (97%) of the legislators in the sample offered contact information, as did a majority of the candidates (93%). These statistics give the appearance that both groups are easily accessible; however, the results are somewhat misleading. While legislators provided slightly more contact information overall, in reality, it was found that legislators were actually much *less* accessible than candidates -- and almost impossible for non-constituents to communicate with. In fact, as was discovered in a separate experiment conducted by the author, of the 196 politicians who responded to a short e-mail concerning their Web sites, ninety-eight percent (N=44) were candidates while *only two percent* (n=1) were legislators (see Appendix). As was indicated in the previous section, the issue of accessibility is further discussed in Chapter Six.

Press releases were the third area comprising the information variable. The results indicated that legislators offered a significantly higher percentage of press releases, or at least links to press releases, on their homepages than did candidates (95% vs. 71%; $p<.01$). This finding was unexpected, since several of the Web designers interviewed in the preceding chapter, as well as others outside the design industry (see Connell 1998), have indicated that the press is a primary online target audience for politicians. In fact, one recent survey of the media's Internet habits indicated that a full 92 percent of journalists conduct online research (Middleburg and Ross 2000). The data also revealed that political

reporters are increasingly using the Web to obtain press releases, and are regularly perusing the homepages of politicians. As Dallas Morning News reporter Jeffrey Weiss (as cited in Cochran 1996, p. 40) observes, "A political reporter who's not online is behind the curve a little bit."

While the frequency of press releases varied greatly for both groups, over one-third of the legislators who posted releases provided three (20%) or six (16%) releases, while almost sixty percent of the candidates offered only one (31%) or two (28%). The legislator with the most press releases on his homepage (n=31) was Rep. Jay Inslee (D-WA); the candidate with the most press releases on his homepage (n=16) was Joe Turnham, a Democratic challenger from Alabama. Judging from these numbers, it appears that Inslee and Turnham recognize members of the media as a significant online audience (Shaw 2002).

Since providing information on issue positions is a primary function of campaigns (see Hart 2000), the results of the fourth measurement under the information variable, *basic political issues*, were surprising. Issues such as taxes, education, and health care were mentioned by a significantly higher percentage of legislators than candidates (80% vs. 48%; $p<.01$). Numbers aside, however, few politicians from either group went into detail about basic issues on their homepages, and often they were simply omitted altogether. On the rare occasions that basic issues were elaborated on, it was almost always by legislators. This finding is even more puzzling when coupled with the fact that various studies

have shown that information about candidate issue positions is *the most sought after* type of online political information for voters. Indeed, one recent survey indicated that of those who go online for election news, 79 percent look for information as to where candidates stand on the issues (Pew Research Center 2003).

Of the politicians in the sample who did discuss basic political issues, the topic most frequently mentioned by Democratic legislators was the environment (37% of Democratic legislators mentioned it), while the most popular issue among Republican legislators was taxes (63%). Taxes were also the most popular subject for Republican candidates (25% mentioned it), while the top issue for Democratic candidates was health care (34%). That candidates and legislators would stick to the issues traditionally associated with their respective political parties was expected, and agrees with the findings of Petrocik (as cited in Thurber and Nelson 1995, p. 135), who observed:

> Democratic candidates say things that Democratic candidates usually say; Republicans say things that GOP candidates usually say' a Democrat and a Republican rarely use each other's lines. They rarely even talk about the same issues, since each is attempting to define the election as a struggle over issues at which his or her party is normally regarded as a better performer. Occasionally a candidate has an atypical position (a pro-life Democrat opposes a pro-choice Republican), but a candidate's speeches and commercials are primarily about the predictable issues and issue positions of his or her party.

The following example from the homepage of challenging House candidate Adam Cox (D-TN) is typical of the scant attention paid to basic political issues by the candidates and legislators in the sample:

> Thank you for visiting the Adam Cox for Congress Homepage. I believe that in order to move forward as a nation, we must go back to real Democratic values. Equality, Tolerance, and Justice are not just words but the foundation of our society. I am running for Congress because I want to help ensure the rights of everyone and see to it that truly no one is left behind. Now is a time for real problem solvers in Washington. **People who are not afraid to roll up their sleeves and dig into the morass of problems facing social security, education, welfare, healthcare and the environment.** Someone to stand up for all and fulfill the role of government that the founding fathers envisioned...A body that watches out for people, not over them.

In this passage, Cox provides solid examples of Democratic ideology while merely touching upon some of the major political issues that go along with it. Perhaps this represents the reluctance that Cox and most other politicians feel about speaking in detail on issues, lest their remarks be misinterpreted by citizens, opponents, or members of the press. This theory concurs with the views of a number of the Web designers in Chapter Four, who indicated that many politicians are unwilling to post too much information due to the fact that it might be misunderstood or misused.

Privacy statements (i.e. notices informing visitors that any information they provide via the site will remain confidential) were the fifth aspect measured under the variable of information. While exactly half (50%) of all House members provided this information, candidates lagged behind at only eleven percent. These frequencies indicate that legislators are more willing to respect the privacy of visitors, while candidates may be more interested in actively gathering information about site visitors for campaigning purposes.

Interestingly, only fourteen percent of legislators and eight percent of candidates notified visitors as to when their sites were *last updated* -- the sixth item under the variable of information. This small percentage points to the possibility that political sites are neither maintained nor updated on a regular basis. However, as Fielding (as cited in Delany 2000, ¶ 11) cautions, neglecting to update a site can be a costly mistake. She states, "Campaign sites are under constant scrutiny by friends and enemies, and leaving outdated information in plain sight...not only can turn off potential supporters but gives fodder to the opposition. Skimping on maintenance to save a few dollars can cost more than a campaign can imagine in the long run."

The last category under the information variable in which legislators provided more content than candidates was *district information/maps*. Only thirty-four percent of legislators and thirty-three percent of candidates offered one or both of these features on their Web sites. Of those who did post district

information/maps, the content typically included the demographic breakdown of the district, as well as a map like the one below, found on the campaign site of Rep. Darrell Issa (R-CA). As for those politicians who did not provide specific district information, online constituents were presumably left to wonder whether or not the candidate or legislator actually represented their particular district.

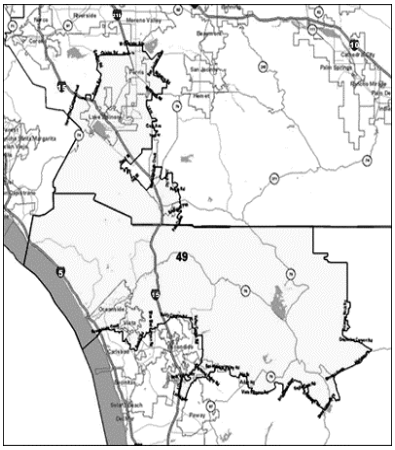


Illustration 5.2: District map from the site of incumbent candidate Darrell Issa (R-CA).

As has been noted throughout the chapter, in all but one of the eight relevant categories, legislators provided slightly more information content than candidates. The only category in which candidates offered more information than

House members was that of *controversial issues,* though the frequencies for both groups were low. This statistic was anticipated, as most politicians prefer to stick with issues that are "immune from contestation" (Beckett 1996, p. 57). Almost twice as many candidates (9%) as legislators (5%) were open to discussing sensitive political issues on the Web. The most popular controversial issues for candidates were religion and abortion (at 3% each), while for legislators, three issues were mentioned in equal measure: abortion, prayer, and race/affirmative action (at 2% each). Given the contention that has surrounded issues like affirmative action and religion in recent years, it was expected, and found, that most politicians prefer to focus on safer issues like improving the public education system, saving the environment, or fighting terrorism.

In addition to the variables mentioned above, the author examined six areas of information for candidates that were either not relevant to the legislative sites or were not measured at the time of the legislative site analysis. Those variables were: *campaign staff information, disclosure of site sponsorship, endorsements, events schedules, voting information,* and *Web designer name*. In all cases, less than sixty percent of candidates provided the pertinent information, and the low frequencies in two areas, voting information and events schedules, were especially surprising. More specifically, given the low rate of voter turnout and the increased efforts in recent years to encourage citizens to vote, it seemed unusual that only thirty-one percent of candidates offered citizens information on

when, where, and how to vote. The fact that only thirty-seven percent of the candidates provided events schedules was also unanticipated, since the Web has been recognized as an ideal place to provide information about campaign events and rally supporters. It is possible that events schedules were omitted because candidates did not wish to commit to certain campaign events that might have to be rescheduled or cancelled or, as was mentioned by several of the interviewees in the prior chapter, because they prefer to keep this information out of the hands of political adversaries.

Information Content by Incumbency

Additional analysis of the information variable was achieved using an "incumbency" measure; incumbents represented thirty-eight percent of the total candidate sample, while challengers represented sixty-two percent. As was expected due to the typical House incumbent advantage, the data indicated that incumbent candidates generally offer more information content on their sites than challenging candidates.

Specifically, incumbent candidates displayed higher frequencies than challengers in *ten* of the fourteen categories though in only one area, that of district information/maps, were the data statistically significant. Those ten categories are as follows: campaign staff information (27% for incumbents vs.

20% for challengers), contact information (95% vs. 92%), district information/maps (47% vs. 24%; $p<.05$), endorsements (42% vs. 33%), events schedules (38% vs. 36%), press releases (76% vs. 69%), privacy statements (13% vs. 10%), campaign staff information (27 vs. 20%), disclosure of site sponsorship (65% vs. 57%), endorsements (42% vs. 33%), events schedules (38% vs. 36%), voting information (35% vs. 29%), and Web designer name (38% vs. 37%). On the other hand, challenging candidates more frequently offered biographies (97% for challengers vs. 91% for incumbents), basic issues (49% vs. 45%), controversial issues (9% vs. 7%), and last updated information (9% vs. 7%).

Despite the efforts of some incumbents, the lack of information content on the sites of both candidates and legislators was unexpected, particularly since more than fifty years of academic research indicates that Americans are largely uninformed about political matters (see Delli Carpini and Keeter 1996), and less than half can name their congressional representative (Roper Center 2000). One political scientist went so far as to state, "The picture of uniformed voters in the election booth staring vainly at their shoes in search of cues to help in their vote decision is in all likelihood not hyperbole," (Ehrenhalt 1992, p. 11). Moreover, while television ads are expensive and are typically limited to 30 seconds or less, the Web provides an almost infinite amount of campaign space at a fraction of the cost.

Information Content by Party

Further analysis of the first hypothesis was achieved using a "party" measure. In brief, when the numbers were examined in terms of political party, it was found that Republican candidates and legislators generally provided more online information than their Democratic colleagues. More specifically, Republican candidates showed higher frequencies than Democrats in the following nine areas: contact information (94% for Republicans vs. 92% for Democrats), basic issues (28% vs. 20%), press releases (72% vs. 71%), last updated information (7% vs. 1%), district information/maps (34% vs. 32%), site sponsorship (61% vs. 58%), endorsements (37% vs. 35%), events schedules (40% vs. 32%), and Web designer name information (39% vs. 35%). Only one significant difference was found regarding voting information, of which Democratic candidates (44%) offered twice as much as Republican candidates (22%; $p<.05$). Democratic candidates also offered slightly more biographies (97% for Democrats vs. 93% for Republicans), and the groups tied in the categories of controversial issues (8% each), privacy statements (11% each), and campaign staff information (23% each).

In the legislative group, Republicans showed higher frequencies than Democrats in four areas: district information/maps (36% for Republicans vs. 32% for Democrats), basic issues (87% vs. 71%), press releases (97% vs. 93%), and privacy statements (33% vs. 16%). Democratic legislators, on the other hand,

featured more biographies (91% for Democrats vs. 87% for Republicans) and contact information (86% vs. 79%); they also more frequently informed visitors when their sites had last been updated (18% vs.10%). The groups tied in the area of controversial issues (at 5% each), but again, the differences in information content between the two parties were generally slight.

Table 5.1

Percentages for Information Content

	Cand	Legis	Repub Cand	Dem Cand	Incumb Cand	Chal Cand	Repub Legis	Dem Legis
Biographies (%)	94	98	93	97	91	97	87	91
Contact	93	97	94	92	95	92	79	86
District Info/Map	33	34	34	32	47*	24*	36	32
Issues (Basic)	48**	80**	28	20	45	49	87*	71*
Issues (Controv)	9	5	8	8	7	9	5	5
Press releases	71**	95**	72	71	76	69	97	93
Privacy statement	11	50	11	11	13	10	33	16
Site last updated	8	14	7	1	7	9	10	18
Campaign staff	23	n/a	23	23	27	20	n/a	n/a
Site sponsorship	60	n/a	61	58	65	57	n/a	n/a
Endorsements	37	n/a	37	35	42	33	n/a	n/a
Events schedule	37	n/a	40	32	38	36	n/a	n/a
Voting information	31	n/a	22*	44*	35	29	n/a	n/a
Web designer	37	n/a	39	35	38	37	n/a	n/a

Note: Significance tests are two-tailed.
*p<.05
**p<.01

CREATIVE CONTENT ON CAMPAIGN AND LEGISLATIVE WEB SITES

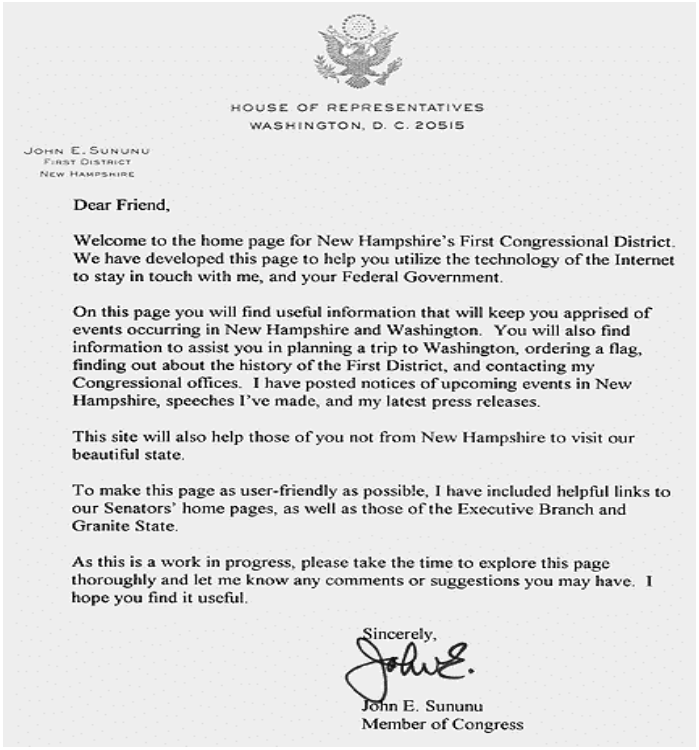
The second area of political Web sites examined in the study was creative content. In political campaigns, one of the main tasks for candidates is to differentiate themselves from their opponents. In fact, upper-level candidates often hire the most experienced and respected ad agencies in the business and, in doing so, are able to tap into a well of creativity not found in everyday, run-of-the-mill politics. Hence, the second hypothesis predicted that the Web sites of candidates would be more creative than those of sitting members of Congress. This hypothesis, however, was not supported. House members displayed higher frequencies in three of the four relevant measures comprising the variable of creativity (see Appendix for a complete description), two of which (graphics and children's sections) were statistically significant. This was perhaps the result of the added financial and technical assistance legislators receive from the House Information Resources (HIR) office, an issue that will be further discussed at the end of the chapter. The only creative area in which candidates outperformed legislators was that of greeting/welcome messages (see Table 5.2).

The first creative value examined was *graphics*, which were characterized as images that looked like a cartoon or drawing rather than a photograph. It was found that members of Congress displayed a significantly higher percentage of graphics on their government sites than did candidates on their campaign sites (96% vs. 48%; $p<.01$). The placement of *photographs* on the homepage was also

a factor in measuring site creativity. Results indicated that legislators provided more photographs than candidates, though only by a slight margin (98% of legislators vs. 93% of candidates). Additionally, whether or not a politician provided an educational *children's section*, often used as a teaching tool in elementary school classrooms, was used as an indicator of Web site creativity. As with the category of graphics, legislators offered a significantly higher percentage of children's sections for younger visitors than did candidates (21% vs. 1%; $p<.01$).

The only creative category in which candidates scored significantly higher than legislators was that of *greeting/welcome messages* (48% for candidates vs. 20% for legislators; $p<.01$). While the numbers were low for both groups, it was unanticipated that only one-fifth of legislators, who are known for working weekends to extend community ties in their districts, would make a point of welcoming constituents onto their homepage with a text statement or an "official" letter on House stationery. As such, this omission seems to demonstrate a simple oversight on the part of the legislators rather than an intentional slighting of constituents.

While most of the greeting messages from those who offered them were short and straightforward, this one from New Hampshire Congressman John Sununu represents one of the more creative examples:



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
WASHINGTON, D. C. 20515

JOHN E. SUNUNU
FIRST DISTRICT
NEW HAMPSHIRE

Dear Friend,

Welcome to the home page for New Hampshire's First Congressional District. We have developed this page to help you utilize the technology of the Internet to stay in touch with me, and your Federal Government.

On this page you will find useful information that will keep you apprised of events occurring in New Hampshire and Washington. You will also find information to assist you in planning a trip to Washington, ordering a flag, finding out about the history of the First District, and contacting my Congressional offices. I have posted notices of upcoming events in New Hampshire, speeches I've made, and my latest press releases.

This site will also help those of you not from New Hampshire to visit our beautiful state.

To make this page as user-friendly as possible, I have included helpful links to our Senators' home pages, as well as those of the Executive Branch and Granite State.

As this is a work in progress, please take the time to explore this page thoroughly and let me know any comments or suggestions you may have. I hope you find it useful.

Sincerely,

John E. Sununu
Member of Congress

Illustration 5.3: Welcome letter from the site of Rep. John Sununu (R-NH).

Sununu's greeting is creative because rather than choosing plain text, the congressman used a scanned piece of House stationery complete with his actual signature, thus providing a formal, yet personal, touch. Moreover, Sununu makes an effort to briefly explain the content of his site and encourages repeat visits by noting that the site is "a work in progress."

Under the variable of creativity, three additional values were measured for candidates only: *campaign advertisements, downloadable campaign materials,*

and *pop-up messages.* While these features are easy to implement and allow candidates the opportunity to significantly heighten the creativity of their sites, very few candidates took advantage of them.

First, only three percent of candidates included campaign ads on their sites. It was anticipated that this number would be much higher, since Web sites offer candidates the occasion to show their ads to as many visitors as are interested at minimal cost. Similarly, only four percent of candidates included downloadable campaign materials like screensavers, logos, and yard signs on their sites. Again, because these resources are inexpensive for campaigns to provide (and, in fact, because visitors would absorb the costs of paper and printing), it was interesting that so few candidates offered downloadable items. Finally, just five percent of candidates used introductory pop-up ads. Of those who did, three types of messages were used in equal measure: greetings (33%), fundraising solicitations (33%), and volunteer invitations (33%). The following illustration includes two of the four pop-up ads used to encourage contributions on the campaign site of incumbent Mike Rogers (R-MI).

Illustration 5.4: Pop-up ads from the site of incumbent candidate Mike Rogers (R-MI).

Rogers' pop-up messages are effective because they are simple, eye-catching, and colorful. Moreover, the messages are functional; if a visitor clicks on any one of the four pop-ups, they are taken directly to a secure online contribution form where they can donate to Rogers' campaign by credit card.

Creative Content by Incumbency

In agreement with the previous findings on information, data from the content analysis revealed that incumbents scored higher than challengers for most creative values, though the differences were minimal and none were statistically significant. More specifically, incumbents displayed higher frequencies in the following five categories: greeting messages (51% for incumbents vs. 46% for challengers), total number of photographs (96% vs. 92%), citizen photos (24% vs. 14%), family photos (20% vs. 19%), and pop-up messages (9% vs. 2%). On the other hand, challengers featured more campaign ads (4% for challengers vs. 0% for incumbents), graphics (49% vs. 45%) and children's sections (2% vs. 0%). Frequencies for each group were the same in the following three areas: candidate photos (91% each), D.C. photos (16% each), and downloadable campaign materials (4% each).

Creative Content by Party

As was also the case with information content, when the party measure was taken into consideration, Republican candidates and legislators scored higher than Democrats for most creative values though, again, the scores varied only slightly and none were statistically significant. In short, Republican candidates

offered more graphics (52% for Republicans vs. 42% for Democrats), photographs (95% vs. 90%), and children's sections (2% vs. 0%), while Democratic candidates displayed more welcome messages (53% for Democrats vs. 43% for Republicans).

As for legislators, Republicans provided more graphics (97% for Republicans vs. 95% for Democrats) and more greeting messages (23% vs. 18%). On the other hand, Democrats featured more photographs (98% for Democrats vs. 97% for Republicans) and children's sections (27% vs. 16%).

Of the seven candidate-only measures under the area of creative content, Republican candidates offered slightly more content than Democratic candidates in five categories: candidate photos (93% for Republicans vs. 87% for Democrats), citizen photos (26% vs. 15%), family photos (29% vs. 6%; $p<.01$), campaign materials (6% vs. 2%), and pop-up messages (6% vs. 3%), with the only significant difference occurring in the number of family photos. Additionally, Democratic candidates featured more campaign ads (3% for Democrats vs. 2% for Republicans), and the groups tied in the area of D.C. photos (at 16% each).

Table 5.2

Percentages for Creative Content

	Cand	Legis	Repub Cand	Dem Cand	Incumb Cand	Chal Cand	Repub Legis	Dem Legis
Graphics (%)	48*	96*	52	42	45	49	97	95
Greeting message	48*	20*	43	53	51	46	23	18
Children's section	1*	21*	2	0	0	2	16	27
Photos	93	98	95	90	96	92	97	98
Campaign Ads	3	n/a	2	3	0	4	n/a	n/a
Candidate photos	91	n/a	93	87	91	91	n/a	n/a
Citizen photos	18	n/a	26	15	24	14	n/a	n/a
D.C. photos	16	n/a	16	16	16	16	n/a	n/a
Family photos	19	n/a	29*	6*	20	19	n/a	n/a
Campaign materials	4	n/a	6	2	4	4	n/a	n/a
Pop-up messages	5	n/a	6	3	9	2	n/a	n/a

Note: Significance tests are two-tailed.
*p<.01

TECHNOLOGICAL CONTENT ON CAMPAIGN AND LEGISLATIVE WEB SITES

The third area of political Web sites examined for this dissertation was technological content. Hypothesis 3 predicted that political candidates would use more technological innovations than legislators since candidates are, by law, allowed to use some types of technology (e.g. online fundraising and volunteer recruitment features) that legislators are not permitted to utilize. This hypothesis

was supported by the data, though only marginally. Of the eight relevant items that made up the variable of technological content (see Appendix for a complete description), candidates displayed higher frequencies in four areas, House members scored higher on three measures, and the groups tied in one category. Legislators scored significantly higher in the areas of counters and search engines, while candidate frequencies were statistically significant for the e-mail friends/family feature (see Table 5.3).

Candidates, in general, had slightly more *audio files* (4%), and *video files* (6%) than legislators (who provided 3% and 4% respectively). Additionally, campaign sites more frequently offered visitors the chance to sign up for regular *e-mail newsletter updates* (28% for candidates vs. 18% for legislators), as well as a significantly higher percentage of *e-mail friends and family* features (10% vs. 0%; $p<.01$); surprisingly, none of the legislators provided the e-mail friends/family option recognized by the designers in Chapter Four as an extremely important feature. In contrast, the sites of House members included significantly more *counters* (25% for legislators vs. 6% for candidates; $p<.01$) and search engines (21% vs. 6%; $p<.01$), as well as more *polls/surveys* (9% vs. 7%). Candidates and legislators featured *billboards/chat rooms* with the same frequency (only 1% for each group).

As with the variables of information and creativity, a number of features specific to campaign sites were measured: online selling of *campaign*

merchandise, options to provide *campaign Webmaster feedback*, and *contribution* and *volunteer* solicitation capabilities. In two of the four categories, the frequencies were very low; a mere one percent of candidates sold campaign merchandise through their Web sites, and only ten percent offered a form by which visitors could send feedback to the Webmaster. On the other hand, concurring with the observations of the interviewees, it was discovered that online contribution and volunteer recruitment features were quite popular among candidates (with frequencies at 79% and 77%, respectively). Notably, this finding indicates that the priorities of online candidates (i.e. money and free labor) are the same as those in offline campaigns. The example below provides an illustration of the contribution and volunteer sections found on the Web site of challenging candidate Don Smart (D-GA).

Illustration 5.5: Contribution and Volunteer sections from the site of challenging candidate Don Smart (D-GA).

Smart's donation and volunteer links, typical of those found on many of the campaign sites in the study, are a very noticeable part of his homepage. Moreover, Smart makes it easy for supporters to donate or volunteer by leading them to a section where each task can be completed with a single click. The prominent placement of the links and the ease with which supporters can navigate to these sections suggest that raising funds and recruiting volunteers are a top priority for this candidate.

In sum, while a few politicians offered technologically advanced Web sites, the percentages of innovations used by both candidates and legislators were generally low. These findings concur with those of Schmitt (1997, p. 8), who observed of House and Senate Web sites, "Some legislators have taken to the new technology like Webmasters, hiring young computer experts to custom-design fancy homepages with video clips and audio feeds, but most of the others are struggling to cope with the Internet's potential."

Technological Content by Incumbency

When technological content was examined by incumbency, it was found, as with the variables of information and creativity, that incumbent candidates generally provided more technological features than challengers. Namely, incumbents in the candidate sample showed higher percentages in the following

seven categories: e-mail newsletter updates (31% for incumbents vs. 27% for challengers), polls/surveys (7% vs. 6%), search engines (9% vs. 3%), campaign merchandise (2% vs. 0%), online contributions (80% vs. 79%), feedback forms (11% vs. 9%), and volunteer information (80% vs. 74%). Challenging candidates featured more audio files (7% for challengers vs. 0% for incumbents), bulletin board/chat rooms (2% vs. 0%), counters (7% vs. 4%), e-mail friends/family updates (13% vs. 5%), and video files (6% vs. 5%). Only the difference in the percentages of audio files was statistically significant ($p<.05$).

Technological Content by Party

As was the case with the other two variables examined in this chapter, results of the content analysis revealed that Republicans were slightly more likely to include technological features on their sites than Democrats. Republican candidates included more counters (7% for Republicans vs. 3% for Democrats), e-mail friends/family features (11% vs. 10%), e-mail newsletters (31% vs. 24%), polls/surveys (7% vs. 6%), campaign merchandise (1% vs. 0%), and feedback forms (11% vs. 8%). Conversely, Democratic candidates used more audio files (6% for Democrats vs. 2% for Republicans), bulletin board/chat rooms (1% vs. 0%), search engines (6% vs. 5%), and video files (6% vs. 5%).

Similarly, Republican legislators featured more audio files (21% for Republicans vs. 17% for Democrats), e-mail newsletters (27% vs. 11%), polls/surveys (10% vs. 9%), search engines (25% vs. 22%), video files (5% vs. 4%), campaign merchandise (1% vs. 0%), and feedback forms (11% vs. 8%). Only the percentage of e-mail newsletters was statistically significant ($p<.05$). Finally, Democratic legislators offered more bulletin board/chat rooms (1% for Democrats vs. 0% for Republicans) and counters (29% vs. 21%) than did their Republican colleagues.

Table 5.3

Percentages for Technological Content

	Cand	Legis	Repub Cand	Dem Cand	Incumb Cand	Chal Cand	Repub Legis	Dem Legis
Audio files (%)	4	3	2	6	0*	7*	21	17
Bulletin board/chat room	1	1	0	1	0	2	0	1
Counter	6**	25**	7	3	4	7	21	29
E-mail friends/family	10**	0**	11	10	5	13	0	0
E-mail newsletter	28	18	31	24	31	27	27*	11*
Polls and surveys	7	9	7	6	7	6	10	9
Search engine	6**	21**	5	6	9	3	25	22
Video files	6	4	5	6	5	6	5	4
Campaign merchandise	1	n/a	1	0	2	0	n/a	n/a
Contribute	79	n/a	77	82	80	79	n/a	n/a
Feedback form	10	n/a	11	8	11	9	n/a	n/a
Volunteer info	77	n/a	75	79	80	74	n/a	n/a

Note: Significance tests are two-tailed.
*p<.05
**p<.01

STANDOUT SITES

Congressional candidates face the monumental task of not only determining the interests of district residents, but of keeping them informed of, and engaged in, activities and developments within the campaign. While the results of this study indicate that many campaign Web sites have not lived up to this challenge, House candidates Richard Burr (R-NC), Ander Crenshaw (R-FL),

and Stephanie Sanchez (D-CT) have used information, creativity, and technology respectively to overcome these obstacles and better communicate with potential voters and other online audiences. Following, each campaign site is described in relation to its particular strength.

Information Content on the Site of Richard Burr

The campaign site of Richard Burr, Republican Congressman from North Carolina, is clearly focused on informing the residents of the fifth district, the candidate's key audience. Using a variety of features, the site provides visitors with plenty of information without feeling cluttered or unorganized. For example, one section, entitled "Hot Issues," outlines Burr's stances on a number of pressing political topics including bio-terrorism, health care, and taxes. Another section, "Richard's Bills," lists the bills that Rep. Burr has sponsored and co-sponsored over the years, along with detailed explanations of each piece of legislation. Several press releases are offered on the homepage and throughout the site for the benefit of journalists, and Burr provides a thorough biography that describes his career and family life. Finally, Burr offers detailed contact information for both his North Carolina and Washington offices, as well as a personal e-mail address. In short, Burr's site is not only attractive and easy to navigate; it is extremely

informative, obviously recognizing the needs of constituents as well as members of the media.

Illustration 5.6: Homepage of incumbent candidate Richard Burr (R-NC).

Creative Content on the Site of Ander Crenshaw

The official campaign site of Ander Crenshaw, incumbent Republican candidate from Florida's fourth district, is simple, colorful, and inviting. Rather than the red, white, and blue that many candidates currently seem to favor, Crenshaw uses a warm color scheme and an attractive, casual photograph of himself dressed in jeans and a denim shirt. The photograph, most likely taken by a professional, makes Crenshaw look down-to-earth, which is particularly important for an incumbent; it also demonstrates the candidate's desire to avoid the typical suit-and-tie-in-front-of-the-American-flag headshot. Additionally, Crenshaw uses subtle flashing and moving star graphics on his homepage, thanking visitors for their support while simultaneously conveying a timely message of patriotism. Finally, while Crenshaw's site is creative in its presentation, it is also informative and easy to navigate, indicating that the candidate didn't necessarily choose style over substance.

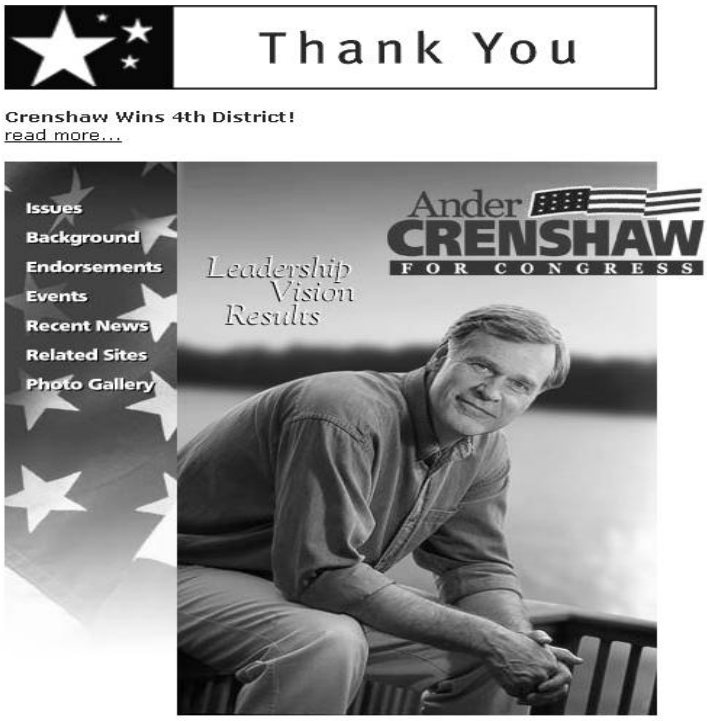


Illustration 5.7: Homepage of incumbent candidate Ander Crenshaw (R-FL).

Technological Content on the Site of Stephanie Sanchez

From the first glance, it's clear that the Web site of Stephanie Sanchez, Democratic congressional candidate from Connecticut's fourth district, was designed with technology in mind. While Sanchez supplies most of the necessary basic political information, the site is also filled with innovations, such as a pop-up poll asking which issue Fairfield County residents feel is most important, a flashing credit card section indicating the site's ability to take online donations, and a section where visitors can sign up to volunteer.

The Sanchez site is also one of only eight campaign sites in the sample that provided video files. In fact, Sanchez offers a complete multimedia section with several video news clips that feature the candidate talking with reporters on a variety of issues from education to the economy. Sanchez also provides a 30-second campaign spot in which she speaks out against Republicans in Congress. While, not unimportantly, the candidate neglects to offer some key technological features such as an e-mail update option for mobilizing supporters and a search engine to assist visitors with navigation, the Sanchez for Congress site is, nonetheless, relatively extensive in its use of technology.

Illustration 5.8: Homepage of challenging candidate Stephanie Sanchez (D-CT).

DISCUSSION

Despite the glowing comments of many of the observers (see Jalonick 2000; Mark 2002) quoted in the first chapter of this dissertation, the findings from the content analysis largely coincide with the opinions of the Web designers in Chapter Four, who suggested that congressional campaign sites are highly under-utilized at this point in time. More specifically, the data show that House campaign sites are less informative, less creative, and only slightly more technologically innovative than the official government sites of House members.

There is also evidence that the sites of incumbents are more effective than those of challengers, as are the sites of Republicans when compared to their Democratic colleagues. The remainder of this chapter offers several possible explanations for these findings.

First, as was mentioned in earlier chapters, it has historically taken several years after the introduction of a new medium for that medium to be accepted by the public. Politicians are, of course, a part of this public, and it seems to reason that perhaps candidates are waiting to learn more about what the Internet and the Web can do for politics. As Klotz (1997, p. 482) summarizes, "As with the adoption of any new technology, Internet use by political candidates will undergo some early rough spots." Whatever the case, as Browning (1997) observes, it seems that the candidates who come to understand and accept this new technology will be the ones who benefit from it the most.

A second reason for the hesitancy on the part of candidates to use the Web to its fullest potential may be simply that *politicians are politicians*; in today's poll-driven society, the words and actions of candidates are carefully and painstakingly crafted whether the forum is a debate, a television ad, a speech, or -- apparently -- a Web site. Former president Bill Clinton is perhaps best known for embodying this quality. As one newspaper editor wrote (Gerard 1998, ¶ 1), "Whatever you say about President Bill Clinton, you have to admire his ability to test the political winds. He is a veritable political anemometer. He is the ultimate

politician." Moreover, candidates may be approaching the Web with caution because it is a medium in which posted information is, in a sense, forever. Even if online information is altered by a candidate, there is still the possibility that the data could be saved on a journalist's or, worse, an opponent's hard drive. Since candidates, as was previously mentioned, prefer having complete control over their messages, it is likely that many remain conservative in posting site content for fear that it might cause irreparable harm at a later date. As one 1999 gubernatorial candidate states, "Anything I put on the Web can be used against me," (Ireland and Nash 2002, p. 50). Adds Deutsch (as cited in Fineman 1995, p. 32):

> Nobody can hide. Most of the Internet conversations and information are available to anyone. The enemy can usually read over your shoulder and butt in. You have to be very aware that the whole world can listen in to what you are saying.

Finally, as several of the Web designers in the previous chapter noted, campaign sites may be lacking at this time because candidates have yet to fully integrate them into their campaigns. Currently, Web sites appear to be a means for candidates to briefly introduce themselves in hopes of soliciting funds and

recruiting volunteers, rather than a concentrated effort to communicate with citizens. As one interviewee observed, "A lot of candidates initially approach the campaign site as solely a fundraising vehicle[38]."

Incumbents and Challengers

In reference to incumbents and challengers, perhaps the fact that incumbent sites generally contained more information, higher levels of creativity, and more technological innovations than those of challengers indicates that the incumbent advantage is as much at play on the Web as it is in the offline world of politics. As Banks and Kiewiet (1989, p. 997) observe, "Over the past two decades, over 93 percent of incumbent members of Congress who seek re-election have been successful. This high success rate is in large measure due to the resources that incumbents possess." The numbers for the 2002 mid-term election accurately reflect this statement; a full *98 percent* of House incumbents were re-elected, as were 85 percent of incumbent Senators. In terms of dollars, the incumbent advantage for Representatives and Senators in the 2002 race was approximately *$272 million* and *$50.5 million*, respectively (Federal Election Commission 2002) (see Appendix for a complete expenditures table).

[38] I4.

Incumbents also tend to be better known among voters, and are more experienced at campaigning than most challengers (Jacobson 1990). In fact, a substantial body of research suggests that incumbents typically do not face a strong challenger of the opposing party in the general election (Huckshorn and Spencer 1971; Jacobson 1980; Leuthold 1968; Mann and Wolfinger 1980). As Banks and Kiewet (1989, p. 997) maintain, "The low probability of defeating incumbent members of Congress deters potentially strong rivals from challenging them. Yet almost all incumbents are challenged, usually by opponents who lack previous experience in office and run under-financed, ineffectual campaigns."

Republicans and Democrats

As for Republicans and Democrats, history reveals that as a group, Republicans have been better educated and have had more financial resources to draw upon than their colleagues from across the aisle (see Theimer 2002). In a recent example, figures from the Federal Election Commission (2002) specify that Republican House and Senate candidates spent a collective *$15 million* more than Democratic candidates in the 2002 election. These realities may provide at least some indication as to why the sites of the Republicans in this sample were generally more informative, more creative, and more technologically advanced than those of Democrats. Specifically, it seems to reason that with more money at

their disposal, Republican candidates can afford to hire the best in political Web design firms, thus ensuring that careful attention will be paid to design, layout, content, and other factors that contribute to a well-developed campaign site.

SUMMARY

The findings from this chapter concerning information, creativity, and technology on campaign sites are consistent with the lukewarm sentiments posed by the Web designers in Chapter Four. They also concur with the results of a related study conducted by Williams, Aylesworth, and Chapman (Bentley College 2002) who, after examining the campaign sites of 171 Senate candidates, concluded that both the content and appearance of the sites left much room for improvement. States Schmitt (1997, p. 8), who noted a similar pattern in his examination of House and Senate sites, "...while some of those congressional offices that have the most cyber-literate constituents have the most accessible sites, others put up offerings that are disappointingly pedestrian or uninformative." Finally, Cornfield, Safdar, and Seiger (1998, p. 26) observe of House campaign sites, "Well, there is some creativity out there on the virtual trail. Some of you political Web masters are taking our collective breath away. Unfortunately, there is also a lot of conformity, hyper-caution, and dullness." The

message that Schmitt, Cornfield, the interviewees, and other like-minded individuals are sending is clear: if candidates want visitors to view their sites with the same interest that is typically paid to more traditional ads, campaign Web sites must become a top priority.

Nonetheless, most believe it is only a matter of time before Web sites will be fully integrated into political campaigns and, therefore, fully functional. While campaign sites may never take the place of television and radio ads, many advertising creatives, academics, journalists, and citizens agree that in the near future, Web sites could be as much a part of political campaigns as old-fashioned yard signs and bumper stickers.

Chapter 6: Partisanship, Opposition, and Accessibility on Congressional Web Sites

If you start **spewing on your Web site Republican this, Republican that**...It's just not done. It's not that legislators are necessarily trying to hide it. It's just not their goal. They are there to serve their constituents. -- (*Political Web Design Consultant D. Almacy, telephone interview, August 9, 2002).*

There's **not much mudslinging on the Internet** as of yet, and that's a good thing. -- *(Political Web Design Consultant J. Karush, telephone interview, August 6, 2002).*

I would **avoid saying negative things about the other candidate** on an official campaign site because it doesn't seem to work that well on the Web. -- *(Political Web Design Consultant S. Weaver, telephone interview, August 5, 2002).*

The preceding chapter indicated that overall, the Web sites of congressional candidates are somewhat lacking in terms of information, creativity, and technology. These findings are in agreement with the comments

of the Web designers in Chapter Four, and with other observers in politics and academics as well. Moreover, it was found that the sites of incumbents and Republicans were slightly better-developed than those of challengers and Democrats, respectively.

While the discrepancies in the above findings were often minimal, there were three very noticeable differences among the sites of candidates and legislators. Those differences, which involve partisan content, political opposition, and accessibility, are the focus of Chapter 6. Although the findings presented in this chapter may seem surprising at first glance, it will be shown that cultural norms and democratic theory actually support these assertions (see Fenno 1977).

First, the author examines the role and meaning of partisanship as it relates to the U.S. electoral system and offers observations about the discrepancies in partisan cues found on the campaign and legislative Web sites in the content analysis. Subsequently, the same treatment will be given to the issues of online political opposition and accessibility. The chapter ends with a summary and discussion of the results.

PARTISANSHIP IN AMERICA AND ON THE WEB

The first area in which there were clear differences between the sites of candidates and legislators was that of *partisan content*. As Ansolabehere and Iyengar (1995, pp. 73-74) observe, "Party allegiances reflect the degree to which the parties and the candidates who run under their banners represent, and have represented, the voters' interests. They are shorthand for what people want and expect from government and what the parties, as governing organizations, can claim credit for or should receive blame for." The partisan preferences of most U.S. citizens fall into three groups: Democrat, Republican, and Independent, with roughly two-thirds of Americans labeling themselves as either Democrats or Republicans.

While partisanship is part and parcel of everyday politics, there is arguably no arena in which it is more prominent than political campaigns. During elections, parties play a major role in such tasks as providing information, enlisting candidates, and marshalling voters. Not surprisingly, much research from the fields of advertising, communication studies, and political science has focused on the effects of campaign advertising on partisanship. A number of studies have indicated that campaign ads can reinforce the beliefs of loyal party members, and can even convert voters from opposing parties (see Ansolabehere and Iyengar 1995). Other related areas of study include: the effects of partisanship on

legislative decision-making (Scully and Patterson 2001), the impact of individual partisanship on presidential performance evaluations (Bond and Fleisher 2001), the association between partisanship and support of ballot measures (Berman and Yawn 2001), and the relationship of partisanship with respect to voting preference and behavior (Aldrich 1995; Campbell et al. 1960; Delli Carpini and Keeter 1993).

Partisanship is such an important part of campaigns, in fact, that most political scientists who study campaigns agree that nonpartisan elections in upper ballot races would actually be *harmful* to citizens, and to democracy. As Sherrill notes (1998, p. 15):

> Absent political parties and collective responsibility, the voters lose their ability to distinguish the officials whose behavior they, on balance, supported from those they thought should be replaced...In general, our experience teaches us that nonpartisan elections serve to frustrate democracy...The alternative to party politics is the politics of everyone for him- or herself.

PARTISAN CONTENT ON CAMPAIGN AND LEGISLATIVE WEB SITES

While political candidates operate as active partisans, sitting legislators are required to serve *all* of the individuals in a district -- not just those of a certain political stripe. In addition to serving constituents from various political factions,

legislators and their staffs must handle numerous citizen concerns (such as handling flag requests and supplying constituents with copies of legislation) that have nothing to do with political party.

For these reasons, the fourth hypothesis predicted that partisan content would be very prominent on the Web sites of congressional candidates, and less obvious on those of sitting U.S. House members. It was also assumed that online partisan cues would be similar to those found in traditional political advertisements. As was explained in the Methodology, partisan cues fell into three categories: (1) *words*, such as "Democrat", "Republican", "liberal" and "conservative," (2) *graphics*, such as the GOP elephant and Democratic donkey; and (3) *photographs* of prominent politicians like Al Gore and George W. Bush.

Results of the content analysis supported the fourth hypothesis. As the data in Table 6.1 show, there were statistically significant differences ($p<.01$) between candidates and legislators in terms of online partisan content. Significant differences for this variable were also found between incumbents and challengers, as well as Republican and Democratic candidates.

Specifically, while fifty-seven percent of candidates placed partisan cues on their Web sites, only seventeen percent of House members did the same. In addition to the discrepancy in percentages, partisan cues on the campaign pages were typically very easy to see, while legislative partisanship was more subtle. Of

the three markers examined, partisan texts were most popular, followed by graphics, then photographs.

These findings are consistent with those of Jarvis (1996), who discovered in an earlier study of House legislative sites that only twenty-two percent of sitting congresspersons used partisan texts or symbols on their homepages. The data also support the notion that the partisan cues found on the Web are similar to those found in more traditional political advertisements.

Since partisanship is at the heart of most political campaigns, the fact that the Web sites of congressional candidates were much more partisan than those of legislators is not surprising. Again, the reality that legislators must serve Republicans, Democrats, and others in their districts is likely to have played a role in the findings. It is also probable that the terrorist attacks of September 11, which served as a catalyst for Republicans and Democrats to set aside their differences and present a united front, contributed to the findings.

Partisan Content by Incumbency

When the partisanship variable was examined using an incumbency measure, there were again significant differences ($p<.01$) between the campaign and legislative samples. While approximately two-thirds (67%) of challenging candidates displayed partisan content, less than half (40%) of incumbent

candidates did the same. The reason challenging candidates featured more partisanship likely has to do with the fact that incumbent candidates, as Ehrenhalt (1992, p. 11) notes, "are far more likely to be familiar." As such, it is assumed that most constituents already know which political party incumbent candidates are affiliated with. Challengers, on the other hand, are often unrecognized; thus, it seems reasonable that this group would be more apt to let potential online voters know which party they represent.

Partisan Content by Party

As with the variables of information, creativity, and technology examined in Chapter Five, when partisan content was broken down by party, it was found that Republicans displayed more online partisanship in both the candidate and legislative groups. A hefty sixty-five percent of Republican candidates used partisan cues on their homepages, as opposed to forty-five percent of Democratic candidates, a figure that was statistically significant ($p<.05$). Additionally, eighteen percent of Republican legislators and fourteen percent of Democratic legislators displayed partisan content on their homepages. The fact that so many in the GOP displayed online partisanship may be related to a sense of political pride; at the time these sites were saved, the Republicans enjoyed control of the House of Representatives *and* control of the White House.

Notably, although no bipartisanship was found on the sites of Republican candidates, a small number of Democratic candidates (6%) actually displayed *bipartisanship* on their campaign sites. For instance, some Democratic candidates featured such amicable statements as, "I stand firmly behind the resolve of the President" and "I'm a bridge-builder who can reach across party lines." Again, this likely points to the nature of the political climate after September 11, as well as President George W. Bush's consistently high approval ratings. In the following section, examples of obvious partisanship as featured on the sites of both a Republican and Democratic House candidate are offered as a means of illustration.

Table 6.1

Percentages for Partisan Content

	Cand	**Legis**	**Repub Cand**	**Dem Cand**	**Incumb Cand**	**Chal Cand**	**Repub Legis**	**Dem Legis**
Partisan Content (%) (text, graphics, or photos)	57**	17**	65*	45*	40**	67**	18	14

Note: Significance tests are two-tailed.
*p<.05
**p<.01

Partisan Content on the Sites of Charles Sanders and Mike Rogers

Charles Sanders

While several sites in the campaign sample displayed two of the three types of partisan content measured in this study, only one featured all three -- that of former Ohio mayor and Democratic challenger Charles Sanders. The first hint as to Sanders' party is a prominent photograph of the candidate smiling warmly as he shakes the hand of Bill Clinton. At the bottom of the page, a hyper-linked graphic with the words "The Ohio Democratic Party" and another to "Democrats Online" also serve as obvious partisan cues. In addition to the more noticeable instances of partisanship, Sanders offers a subtle Democratic reference in his welcome message, stating, "Our current Congressman has forgotten about the working people of this district. With your help, Sanders can and will win this election -- and then the people of the Second District will have a Congressman who really understands their needs and concerns." While this reference was not counted as partisanship in the content analysis because it failed to meet the specific criteria, it *did* serve as an understated reference to a key Democratic constituency.

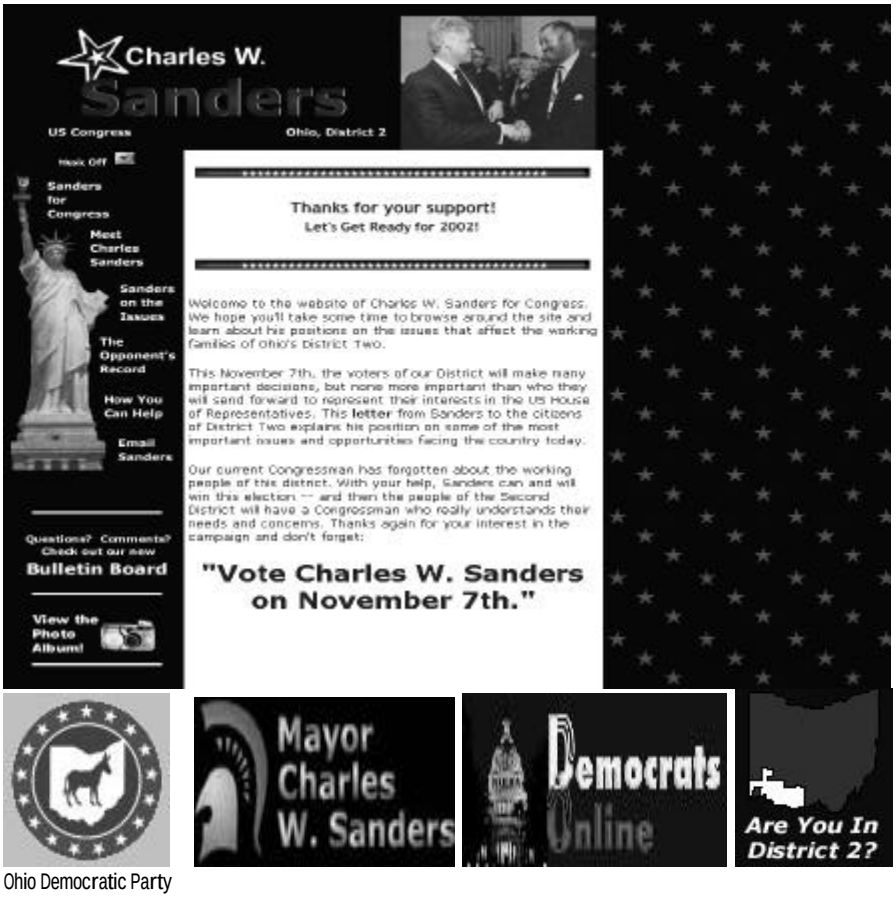


Illustration 6.1: Homepage of challenging candidate Charles Sanders (D-OH).

Here, Sanders attempts to campaign by sending obvious online partisan cues rather than shying away from them. His site is notable because this is an option selected by just over half (57%) of the candidates in the sample and only seventeen percent of the legislators. Sanders' choice is especially intriguing in

2002, a time when Republican candidates were more likely to advertise such cues than Democrats.

Mike Rogers

While only one type of partisanship is found on the homepage of Alabama Republican challenger Mike Rogers, it is interesting to note how this candidate uses one of the most recognizable Republican symbols. The fact that no less than eight whole or partial GOP elephants are visible on Rogers' homepage leaves no doubt in the visitor's mind as to which political party Rogers belongs. While many politicians avoided this type of approach, possibly in an effort to gain the attention of the increasingly important -- and growing -- group of undecided voters, Rogers boldly declares where his loyalties rest.

Illustration 6.2: Homepage of challenging candidate Mike Rogers (R-AL).

The fact that Rogers displays the Republican elephant so prominently shows that he is proud of his party and the issues on which it stands, and probably feels comfortable that the voters of Alabama feel this way as well. Moreover, the candidate backs his homepage style with plenty of relevant information; for instance, the scrolling link at the bottom of the homepage entitled "Click Here To

Read Where Mike Rogers Really Stands on the Issues," guides visitors to a specific section where they can read more about Rogers' Republican ideals.

POLITICAL OPPOSITION IN AMERICA AND ON THE WEB

Like partisanship, *political opposition*, the second notable area of discrepancy found between campaign and legislative sites, is a dominant theme in politics. As was explained in the Methodology, political opposition is characterized as detected anger or resentment toward a rival political party or a specific political candidate. The types of conflicts and quarrels that represent political opposition have, in fact, inhabited the political world during elections, and in non-election years, throughout history. For example, an 1865 Harper's Weekly article provides a sampling of the derogatory names Abraham Lincoln was called during his presidency (Jamieson 1992, p. 43):

> Filthy Story-Teller, Despot, Liar, Thief, Braggart, Buffoon, Usurper, Monster, Ignoramus Abe, Old Scoundrel, Perjurer, Robber, Swindler, Tyrant, Fiend, Butcher, Land-Pirate, and Long, Lean, Lank, Lantern-Jawed, High-Cheekboned, Spavined, Rail-Splitting Stallion.

Most voters do not have an encyclopedic knowledge of the history of negativity in politics, and it is not uncommon for citizens to believe that the

"present" (i.e. 2002) marks an unusually negative period in politics. The visibility and vividness of contemporary attack advertising (Jamieson 1992) offers support for this lay understanding.

"Negative" or "attack" campaign advertisements are spots that refer directly to an opposing candidate, the issues for which the opposing candidate stands, or the party of the opposing candidate (Surlin and Gordon 1977). A great deal can be found in the literature on the empirical effects of negative political advertising. For instance, subjects have rated candidates as less qualified, less honest, less serious, less sincere, less successful, and less fiscally responsible after viewing negative political ads about those candidates (Kaid and Boydston 1987). Scholars have also found that negative ads leave greater impressions than positive or neutral ads (Kellerman 1989), and that negative information is weighted more heavily than positive information in political perception and behavior (Lau 1982, 1985). As Ansolabehere and Iyengar (1995, p. 147) summarize:

> Against the trickle of ads urging people to vote rushes a flood of negative campaign commercials that erode the participatory ethos. Candidate after candidate has turned to negative advertising, and once the gates of negative campaigning are opened, they are difficult to close. The best way to answer an attack is with another attack.

POLITICAL OPPOSITION ON CAMPAIGN AND LEGISLATIVE WEB SITES

Since the Web sites of candidates are an extension of political campaigns, it is reasonable to assume that the competitive campaign practices that define negative advertisements might also be found on the sites of those running for Congress. One of the earliest uses of the Web to attack a challenger occurred in Virginia in 1998, when city council candidate A.M. "Don" Weeks attacked incumbent Louisa M. Strayhorn on his campaign site with the following accusation (as cited in Johnson 1999):

> Is Councilwoman Louisa Strayhorn doing her share of the work? No. Never has there been a more obvious lack of leadership on city council from the Kempsville District.

In contrast, because legislative sites are governed by House rules, and since members of Congress serve constituents from various political parties, it is reasonable to assume that these sites would be less confrontational. As such, the fifth and final hypothesis theorized that candidates would make more references to political opposition on their campaign sites than would legislators on their official government sites. This hypothesis was supported by the data; a significantly higher percentage of candidates (10% of candidates vs. 3% of legislators; $p<.05$) included political opposition, either in the form of attack ads,

press releases, or other texts introducing or responding to opposition. For both groups, the most popular form of political opposition was press releases introducing opposition (see Table 6.2).

Although it was anticipated that candidates would display more political opposition than legislators due to the frequently negative nature of political campaigns, the percentages for each group were lower than expected. The fact that minimal political opposition was found on the Web sites in the sample agrees with the observation of Johnson (1999, p. 713), who predicted:

> This form of communication, by its very nature, will not become a vehicle for screaming, red-hot attacks. Much will depend on what is considered acceptable over the Internet. Right now, we simply do not know what the Internet will tolerate. Campaigns are gingerly testing citizen tolerance...

Political Opposition by Incumbency

When political opposition was measured by incumbency, there were discrepancies among incumbent candidates and challenging candidates although, again, the percentages for both groups were low and the differences were not statistically significant. While thirteen percent of challenging candidates displayed at least one form of political opposition, only four percent of incumbent candidates did the same.

The fact that so few challenging candidates featured political opposition is surprising when one considers the heavy role that negative advertising plays in most modern-day political campaigns. Perhaps this is a signal that, as several of the designers in Chapter Four noted, candidates are not yet incorporating Web sites into their overall campaign strategies. On the other hand, the lack of opposition on the sites of incumbents seems to indicate a hesitancy on the part of incumbents to take their challengers seriously. As Hart (2000) has observed, incumbent candidates rarely refer to challengers in campaign discourse unless, of course, the challenger is ahead in the race. It has been preferable, Hart states, for incumbents to deny challengers the legitimacy of a mention in speeches and advertisements.

Political Opposition by Party

When the party measure was introduced, results indicated that Democratic candidates (11%) featured slightly more political opposition than Republican candidates (8%). On the other hand, Republican legislators (2%, n=2) featured more political opposition than Democratic legislators (1%, n=1). Though the differences were not statistically significant, this finding becomes interesting when coupled with the results on partisan content. Perhaps the fact that Republicans displayed more partisanship on their Web sites while Democrats

featured more political opposition indicates that displaying partisan cues (e.g. featuring the GOP elephant numerous times on a homepage) is a symbol of the political pride of the party who holds the presidency, while statements of political opposition are a more fitting choice for the party that is not currently in power and desires to speak out against the leadership. That is, in 2002, Democrats did not campaign "against Republicans" as much as "against individuals, policies, and ideas" on these sites. Following, the sites of a Republican challenger and a Democratic incumbent are discussed in terms of political opposition.

Table 6.2

Percentages for Political Opposition

	Cand	**Legis**	**Repub Cand**	**Dem Cand**	**Incumb Cand**	**Chal Cand**	**Repub Legis**	**Dem Legis**
Political Opposition (%) (press releases or other texts)	10*	3*	8	11	4	13	1	2

Note: Significance tests are two-tailed.

*p<.05

Political Opposition on the Sites of Raymond Wardingley and George Miller

Raymond Wardingley

The campaign site of Illinois Republican challenger Raymond Wardingley featured some of the most direct political opposition of any site in the sample. At the top of the homepage, Wardingley cautions online viewers, "This November, Don't Rush to Judgement!" Hopefully looking past the fact that the word "judgment" is misspelled, the visitor quickly comes to realize that this warning is a play on the name of Wardingley's opponent, Democratic incumbent Bobby Rush. Wardingley further attacks Rush with a yellow banner at the bottom of his homepage that scrolls the following message: "Bobby Rush continues to IGNORE constituents as Ray Wardingley more than TRIPLES his vote total from the 2000 primary to the 2002 primary." The challenger also mentions his opponent in the site's greeting e.g. "I'm giving Bobby Rush notice. I'm not going away," and in a link entitled, "When will we hear from Ray's Opponent?"

In addition to the more obvious signs of political opposition found on Wardingley's homepage, the candidate takes a subtle shot at Rush in his welcome message, stating:

> As we explore a new millennium and a larger constituency, we hope to again make history by restoring the mantle of Lincoln to the Republican Party and finally electing a independent conservative that people of all backgrounds can feel proud to represent them. **After a quarter century of one party rule and a decade of a partisan Congressman who ignores key areas of our dazzling and fascinating metropolis**, we know it's time for a change in the 1st district.

While the homepage was truncated due to its substantial length, the top three-quarters appear in Illustration 6.3.

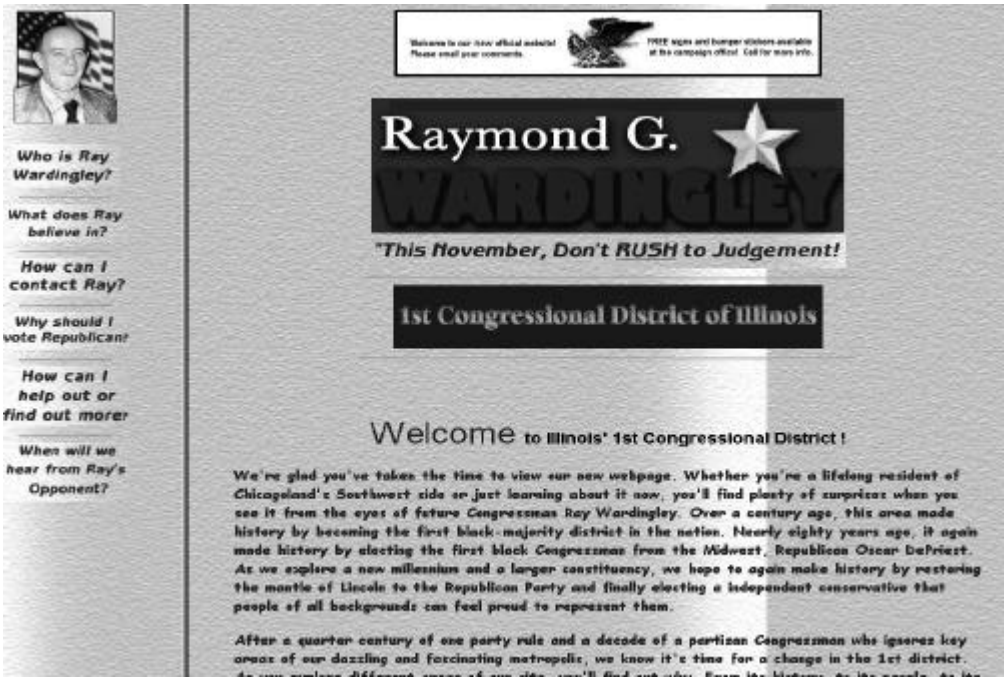


Illustration 6.3: Homepage of challenging candidate Raymond Wardingley (R-IL).

Wardingley's site is reflective of the partisan bickering that has taken place between political candidates throughout history, and particularly of those who are willing to make a point rather than win a race (Jamieson 1984). In fact, the strong opposing barbs that Wardingley aims at Rush echo sentiments that can be found in almost any modern or historical campaign advertisement, speech, or debate. As such, it was expected, but not found, that many more of the campaign sites in the

sample would display political opposition of this fashion. It appears, up to the year 2002 at least, that candidates are engaging in positive campaigns online, leaving the attacks to more traditional campaign media outlets.

George Miller

Rep. George Miller, a California Democrat, is one of only three legislators in the study who displayed political opposition on an official government site. Prominently indicating his party at the top of the homepage, Miller takes aims at George W. Bush and his administration, either directly or indirectly, a total of eight times. Statements such as "Miller Joins Lawsuit Against President Bush Over Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty Withdrawal" and " Representative Miller Critical of Slow Labor Department Investigation on Enron" make it clear that this congressman vehemently opposes the Republican president and his cabinet.

Illustration 6.4: Homepage of incumbent candidate George Miller (D-CA).

In addition to the opposition text on Miller's homepage, at the bottom of the site (also truncated in the example due to its length), the congressman provides a logo with the headline "Slamming Shut the Doors to College," which leads visitors to a forty-four page report criticizing the Bush Administration's handling of higher education funds. Interestingly, while two other legislative sites in the sample featured a minimal amount of political opposition, Miller's site is the only one that seems to truly represent the partisan sparring that occurs daily on Capitol Hill and

in the press. Perhaps this reflects the fact that Miller, a San Francisco Bay area native, has represented California's seventh district since 1975 and was re-elected with seventy-one percent of the vote in 2002. For this reason, Miller may feel relatively safe in his congressional seat and, therefore, more comfortable displaying partisan cues.

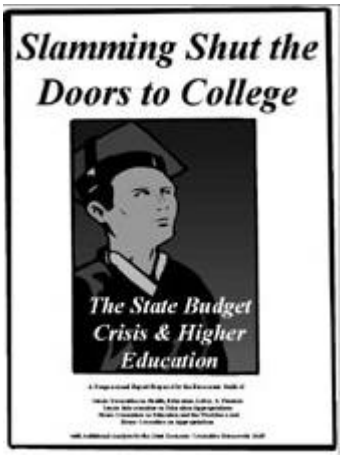


Illustration 6.5: Link on homepage of incumbent candidate George Miller (D-CA).

ACCESSIBILITY ON THE WEB

While not explored in the study's hypotheses, the issue of *online accessibility* stood out as an additional area in which the sites of House candidates differed markedly from those of sitting legislators. Certainly, the Internet and the World Wide Web bring with them great potential to change political life and culture because of the access allowed to users; while traditional outlets like radio and television are easily available across the country, these mediums do not provide citizens the interactive opportunities found online.

The Internet, however, can bring citizens and politicians together *or* it can serve to alienate them from one another depending upon how it is used. As Stromer-Galley (2000) observes, the Internet offers two basic types of interaction: computer-mediated human interaction and media-interaction; the factor that distinguishes these forms of interaction is *who* or *what* provides the feedback. Computer-mediated human-interaction is "prolonged interaction between two or more people through the channel of a computer network," (Stromer-Galley 2000, p. 117). This sort of interaction, to borrow a phrase from Gwilliam (1999, p. 32), allows politicians to relate to citizens as "partners instead of targets." In contrast, during media-interaction, it is the medium itself that provides the feedback. For example, if a citizen sends a congressman an e-mail seeking his views on affirmative action and, in return, receives a personal e-mail back from the congressman, computer-mediated human interaction has taken place. On the other

hand, if the same citizen obtains this information by scrolling through the "Issues" section of a legislator's Web site, media-interaction has occurred.

Stromer-Galley (2000, p.112) found that although the Internet provides unique opportunities for human-interaction, most political candidates choose to put up "a façade of interaction with the campaign and the candidate through media-interaction." The researcher (2000, p. 130) adds that the preference for media-interaction likely has to do with the fact that engaging in human interaction "would open up the possibility for burdensome exchange between candidates, campaign staffs and citizens, which could entail losing control over the communication environment and losing the ability to remain ambiguous in policy positions." Stromer-Galley's observation is interesting, as the issue of control continues to be a central theme of this project.

ACCESSIBILITY ON CAMPAIGN AND LEGISLATIVE WEB SITES

On the surface, it appeared that both groups in the study were easily accessible to constituents; the majority of candidates (93%) and legislators (97%) provided basic contact information such as physical addresses, telephone numbers, and fax numbers (see Table 6.3). However, as was briefly mentioned in Chapter Five, noteworthy differences were found between candidates and legislators concerning their accessibility via e-mail. More specifically, while

almost *all* of the candidates in the sample offered direct e-mail addresses (e.g. john.spratt@aol.com), reaching a legislator proved to be a much more complicated task. Contrary to the above findings of Stromer-Galley (2000), the data from this study indicate that while legislators prefer media-interaction, candidates, as on the campaign trail, are much more willing to engage in human-interaction.

Accessibility by Incumbency and Party

When accessibility was examined in terms of incumbency, differences between incumbent candidates and challenging candidates were minimal, and none were statistically significant. A full ninety-five percent of incumbent candidates provided contact information, as did ninety-two percent of challenging candidates. When the party measure was introduced, results indicated that Republican candidates (94%) provided slightly more contact information on their sites than Democratic candidates (92%). On the other hand, Democratic legislators (86%) appeared more accessible than Republican legislators (79%). Following, examples from the sites of one incumbent, one challenger, and one legislator help illustrate the current state of political accessibility on the Web.

Table 6.3

Percentages for Accessibility

	Cand	Legis	Repub Cand	Dem Cand	Incumb Cand	Chal Cand	Repub Legis	Dem Legis
Accessibility (%)	93	97	94	92	95	92	79	86

Note: Significance tests are two-tailed.

*p<.05

Accessibility of Candidates George Radanovich and Don Smart

George Radanovich

The campaign homepage of George Radanovich, a Republican incumbent from California, features a simple but effective "Communication" area. At the top of the section, Radanovich invites visitors to add themselves to his campaign's fax and/or e-mail list. The congressman also provides two different contact links, as well as a section featuring links to other areas of the site in which Radanovich lists his physical campaign address, phone number, and fax number. Additionally, Radanovich offers his personal e-mail address, george@radanovich.org, and encourages site visitors to contact him, noting that the candidate and his campaign staff "Look forward to hearing from you!"

Illustration 6.6: Homepage of incumbent candidate George Radanovich (R-CA).

Don Smart

Don Smart, a Democratic challenger from Georgia, was another of the many candidates in the sample who emphasized accessibility on his site. Smart prominently displays phone and fax numbers for the campaign, the headquarters' physical address, and a direct e-mail address at the top of his homepage. Smart also encourages site visitors to contact him in his greeting message, stating, "If I

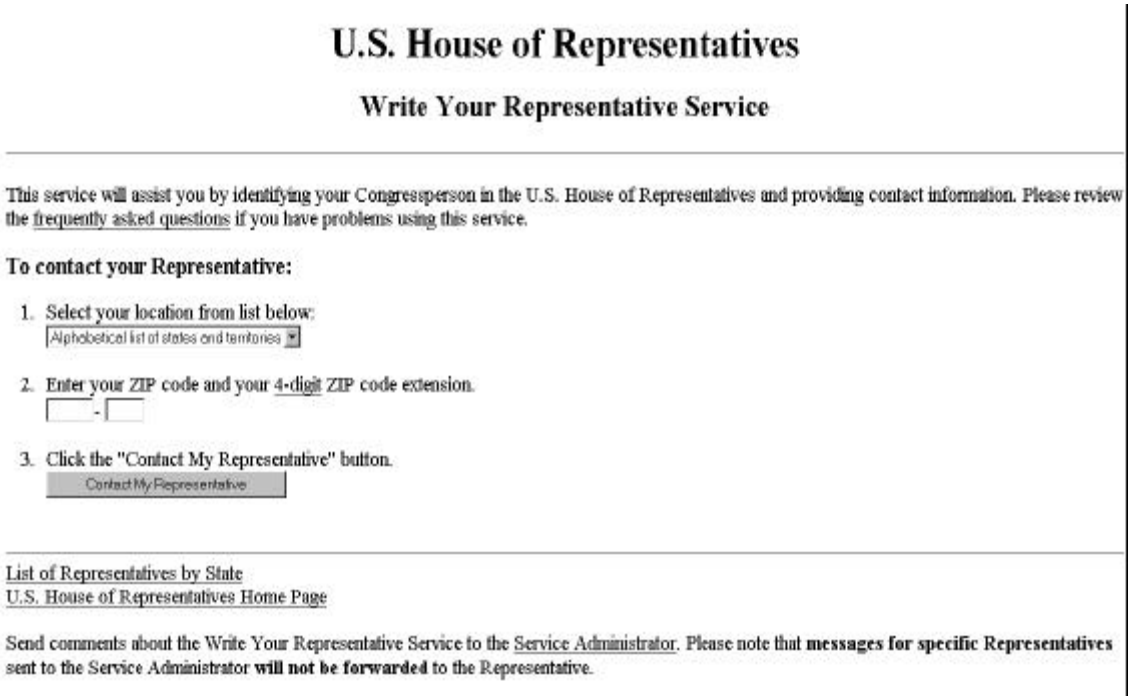
can help you in any way, please contact me directly at donsmartforcongress.com." Smart's site, like that of Radanovich, sends a message that the candidate is not only *able* to participate in human-interaction with site visitors -- he actually looks forward to it.

Illustration 6.7: Homepage of challenging candidate Don Smart (D-GA).

Accessibility Through the "Write Your Representative" Service

As has already been mentioned, while a majority of candidates like Radanovich and Smart made themselves easily accessible to constituents and other site visitors, legislators were much more difficult -- if not impossible -- for the average citizen to reach. In fact, in an effort to manage the mountains of e-mail that flow into the Capitol each day, all 436 members of the House currently use a tool called the "Write Your Representative Service." This system identifies a constituent's congressperson and provides contact information only after the constituent has provided their state and nine-digit zip code information, making it easy to filter out or ignore e-mail from outside a representative's home district.

The "Write Your Representative" homepage, displayed in Illustration 6.8, reflects the obvious difficulties a constituent faces in trying to contact a House member. First, the user will likely have to visit the site of the U.S. Postal Service to determine his/her four-digit zip code extension, at which point they must enter the state in which they reside, along with their address and five-digit zip code. Once the zip code extension is obtained, the user must advance three clicks back to the "Write Your Representative" page, enter the full zip code, and click the "Contact My Representative" button.



U.S. House of Representatives

Write Your Representative Service

This service will assist you by identifying your Congressperson in the U.S. House of Representatives and providing contact information. Please review the frequently asked questions if you have problems using this service.

To contact your Representative:

1. Select your location from list below:
   Alphabetical list of states and territories
2. Enter your ZIP code and your 4-digit ZIP code extension.
   -
3. Click the "Contact My Representative" button.
   Contact My Representative

List of Representatives by State
U.S. House of Representatives Home Page

Send comments about the Write Your Representative Service to the Service Administrator. Please note that **messages for specific Representatives** sent to the Service Administrator **will not be forwarded** to the Representative.

Illustration 6.8: The Write Your Representative Service as featured on the U.S. House of Representatives Web site.

In addition to the numerous steps the "Write Your Representative" service entails, a citizen wishing to contact a legislator via e-mail will likely have to re-enter their full name and physical address on the representative's homepage -- clearly a much more complex task than typing in the single e-mail address offered by many candidates. Complicating matters even further, most legislators state directly on their sites that they do not respond to e-mail from constituents outside of their

home districts. In fact, a recent Congressional Management Foundation survey found that eighty-seven percent of House offices screen out all non-constituent mail, even though it could be argued that a representative's work often affects the entire country (Jones and Ault 1999). Moreover, many legislators send an automated message informing constituents in their districts that their e-mails will be responded to only through postal mail. The following generic auto-reply response, received by the author from the office of Representative Ron Kind (D-WI), is typical:

> Thank you for contacting my office about an issue that I know concerns you. In order to better serve the residents of Wisconsin's Third Congressional District, I am only able to respond to emails submitted through my website. Please use the following link, http://www.house.gov/kind to submit your concern. **Due to staff and resource limitations, I am only able to respond to residents of the Third Congressional District.** Thank you once again for contacting me. Your comments are an integral part of the political process. Without them, I would not be able to make the decisions that affect our community and our nation.
>
> Sincerely, Ron Kind, Member of Congress

Though the legislator is at least willing to respond to his constituents through e-mail rather than postal mail, this reply makes it clear that Kind will not address the concerns of non-constituents. Of course, with the excessive amount of e-mail that congressional offices receive each day, it is not difficult to understand why

non-constituent correspondence is largely ignored by Rep. Kind and others. However, Peter Sepp of the National Taxpayers Union asserts that members of Congress should not disregard mail of any type from non-constituents. States Sepp (as cited in Jones and Ault 1999, ¶ 7), "Members of Congress are not only elected to represent the 400,000-500,000 people in their district, they're elected to represent the national interest. Maybe getting feedback from people outside their district will tell them that parochial issues sometimes have to take a back seat when federal tax dollars are involved." In any case, levels of accessibility continue to fall short of the high expectations described by the cyber-optimists in Chapter Two. They also provide some evidence that legislators prefer to limit contact with those outside the Capitol.

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this chapter was to outline the prominent differences between the congressional campaign and legislative Web sites examined for this dissertation. In agreement with the fourth and fifth hypotheses, the content analysis indicated that the sites of candidates running for open seats in the U.S. House offer more partisan content and more political opposition than the official government sites of legislators. The data also suggested that online candidates are

much more accessible than online legislators. While possible reasons for these differences were discussed throughout the chapter, a summary is provided in the subsequent section.

Reasons for Differences in Partisan Content and Political Opposition

First, since campaigns are the place where partisanship and political differences most often come into play, it was anticipated that the sites of candidates would contain more partisan content and more political opposition than those of legislators. In fact, many observers believe that politics is more negative than ever (see Bryant in Thurber and Nelson 1995), although there is much debate as to whether partisan quarrelling and opposition actually harm or help citizens. After all, negative politics and blatant partisanship -- despised by most -- are an essential part of our electoral system. As Bryant (p. 95) notes:

> The simple fact is that voters ought to know the good and bad points of the candidates who seek their support, and the logical source of information about the bad points of a candidate is that candidate's opponent...It is difficult to imagine how a candidate could present a meaningful and understandable issue-based platform without contrasting the stands taken thereon with those taken by his or her opponent. As such, it stands to reason that the partisan politics found on over half of the campaign Web sites in this study -- and in all other campaign mediums -- will continue for at least the foreseeable future, largely to the benefit of citizens.

Secondly, as was indicated in Chapter Five, it is possible that campaign sites feature more partisanship and more political opposition than legislative sites because while there are restrictions on the types of content that can be posted by incumbents as set forth by the House Committee on Standards of Official Conduct, there are no known rules governing the campaign sites of candidates who do not currently hold a House seat. Specifically, there are two major rules that govern legislative sites. The Committee (U.S. House of Representatives 2002, p. 216) states that official congressional sites "may not include personal, political, or campaign information," and "may not be directly linked or refer to Web sites created or operated by a campaign or any campaign-related entity including political parties and campaign committees." Further, legislative sites "may not include a link to the Member's House Web site," and "may not be advertised on his or her campaign Web site or in materials issued by the campaign." Though these rules are somewhat vague and do not appear to directly interfere with the use of party reference or political opposition, the end result may be a more conservative approach on the part of representatives.

Finally, legislators who already sit comfortably in office are primarily interested in serving their districts and getting re-elected. Those districts, as has already been mentioned, are made up of Democrats, Republicans, Independents, and even fringe party members. The appearance of too much partisanship or opposition might result in representatives' isolating or angering citizens in their

districts who are undecided, or who belong to political groups different from their own. It might also prompt attention that would threaten the incumbent advantage.

Reasons for Differences in Accessibility

In addition to the differences regarding partisanship and political opposition, it was found that online candidates are much more accessible than legislators. In fact, numerous time-consuming steps are required for constituents to contact their representatives online, and it is almost impossible for non-constituents to reach legislators by e-mail. Though many observers insist that politicians must recognize that the potential of the Internet lies in its human-interactive capabilities (see Stromer-Galley 2000), the results of this study showed that *only candidates* are currently taking note. As was indicated in Chapter Five, the fact that legislators are relatively difficult to access may reflect the reality that legislators prefer to conduct their business out of the public eye. On the other hand, candidates -- and especially challengers -- seem to realize that in order to win, they must remain in contact with the voting public.

A related reason that candidates were found to be much more accessible than legislators may be due to the fact that challenging candidates are in a somewhat uncomfortable position; as has already been discussed, in order to be elected to office, common sense dictates that candidates must *try harder* to stay in

touch with voters than those who already reap the benefits of the incumbent advantage. As Ehrenhalt (1992, p. 15) once said of aspiring congresspersons, "Candidates win these offices by selling themselves to the voters...one at a time, day after day." Thus, it is logical that candidates would make a concerted effort to present themselves to as many citizens as possible during election season.

In any case, it seems the only way legislators will become more accessible to citizens is if they are willing to hire the additional staff and resources necessary to handle their growing e-mail correspondence. Of course, until the Web is accepted by politicians as a legitimate means of communication, and until citizens are willing to demand more accessibility, this issue is likely to be overlooked. In the meantime, perhaps both candidates and legislators would do well to heed the advice of Brack (2001, ¶ 3):

> Today's political Internet is like a child. You've got to feed it if it is to grow. Even though we're not sure what it will mature into, the 70+ percent of Americans online are becoming more comfortable with the Internet. Effective campaigns of the future will take advantage of the medium to encourage two-way participation, not just one-way data outflow from candidates and parties.

Chapter 7: Summary and Discussion

Almost everyone running for Congress this year has turned the World Wide Web into a campaign worker. The Web serves as a collection plate, a news outlet and a billboard for position papers. It helps recruit campaign volunteers and generate crowds at campaign appearances. It works as a photo album for displaying flattering snapshots and video clips from the campaign trail...**The Web has stepped up as a force in national politics and cannot be ignored**. -- *Matthews, W. (2000, ¶ 2). Federal Computer Week.*

As the new year begins, the candidates for President are unpacking their long underwear for the quadrennial midwinter showdowns in Iowa and New Hampshire. But something's different in the 2000 campaign. The Presidential race is being fought **not only in the cafes on Main Street but also in cyberspace.** -- *Dunham, R.S. (2000, ¶ 1). Business Week Web site.*

Technological Determinists expect the Internet to remake politics in its own image...They expect to see candidates engaging in direct, unfiltered, two-way communications with citizens. They predict that entrenched incumbents will soon face formidable challenges from novices, outsiders, and insurgents armed only with listservs and Web pages. They imagine that the electorate will become more engaged and informed than ever before, thanks to the massive store of free information that the Internet provides. And **they hope that the World Wide Web will make good arguments, rather than money or power, prevail in politics.** -- *Levine, P. (2002, p. 47). The Civic Web: Online Politics and Democratic Values.*

At the beginning of the 21st century, there has been considerable buzz about the potential role of Web sites in political campaigns. As the snippets above reveal, it is not uncommon to read that the Web has "stepped up as a force and cannot be ignored," that races are being fought "in the cafes on Main Street but

also in cyberspace," and that Web sites have become a "must do for congressional candidates." Less common, of course, are detailed explanations as to how and why this is the case. Accordingly, American citizens have been given a sense that candidates without Web sites *will not win future elections*. But, to date, this study indicates that it has been a very shallow sense indeed.

A considerable amount of research has focused on traditional (e.g. television, radio) political advertising in areas ranging from experimental effects to historical studies to across-media comparisons. However, very little scholarship exists concerning political campaigns on the Web. This dissertation contributes to the current research by examining, through a cultural lens, how modern political candidates are (or are not) using Web sites to promote themselves and their campaigns in cyberspace.

This purpose of this chapter is to summarize the author's qualitative and quantitative findings on the current state of congressional campaign sites. Subsequently, a promising template for future campaign sites from the 2002 Congressional race is offered, along with a discussion of how the site relates to the main points of this project. Finally, study implications, limitations, and directions for future research, along with some concluding thoughts, are provided.

The fundamental premise of this dissertation was that campaign Web sites, analyzed with theory from advertising, communication studies, and political science in mind, could reveal something about the nature of campaigns,

candidates, and democracy in the United States. Following Bimber's (2001) suggestion that scholars focus on the political *content* of the Web, the author attempted to gain a better understanding of how candidates are packaged and presented online through a combination of in-depth interviews with political Web designers and a content analysis of congressional sites. It was hoped this dual-method approach would allow the author to more fully examine the texts and discern the stories they tell about modern political culture.

The specific objectives of this dissertation were threefold: (1) to gain insight into the creation and implementation of campaign sites through the eyes of political Web design elites, (2) to assess how candidates present themselves through the content of their congressional campaign sites; and (3) to compare the campaign sites with the official government sites of sitting House members.

Under the assumption that campaign Web sites would be better-developed than those of legislators based on the notion that candidates in campaign mode "try harder" (see Hart 2000), this study examined the following variables: information content (H1), creative content (H2), technological content (H3), partisan content (H4); and political opposition (H5). Observations pertaining to online accessibility were also offered.

FINDINGS

Comments from the Web designers in Chapter Four indicated that despite the expectations of the interviewees and other observers like those quoted at the beginning of this chapter, candidates do not rely on campaign Web sites in the same way they do traditional advertising. In fact, the findings were largely in agreement with those of Klinenberg and Perrin (2000, p. 34), who note that "Rather than utilizing the potentially revolutionary powers of the Internet, it appears that campaigns will restrict their usage to relatively non-interactive, one directional ways of communicating with voters, supporters, and reporters."

Results from the content analysis in Chapters Five and Six also suggested that congressional campaign sites are currently under-utilized by candidates, and by less moneyed challengers in particular. While campaign sites *do* offer more partisan content (H4), more political opposition (H5), and better accessibility, they are less informative (H1), less creative (H2), and only slightly more technologically innovative (H3) than those of legislators. The fact that only three of the study's hypotheses were supported suggests either that (1) the incumbency bias is alive and well, and limits the suitability of congressional Web sites as a good fit for this study's hypotheses, or (2) the author's theory that candidates would put as much effort into their online campaigns as they do into their offline campaigns is flawed in its assumptions and only partially supported on the Web.

Reasons that Candidates May be Hesitant to Use the Web

This study makes a unique contribution to the debate surrounding politics and the Internet through its discovery that campaign sites are not currently viewed by candidates with the same importance as political television advertisements. Consequently, data from both the interviews and the content analysis indicate that Web sites are not, at least as of yet, a high priority for most campaigns. This finding raises a significant question. If advertising texts, as Schudson (1984) asserts, serve to reinforce rather than stimulate cultural values, what are these texts trying to tell us? Directly responding to Schudson, the author proposes that these assumptions cannot yet be applied to the Internet for at least three reasons.

First, if the Web is to grow in popularity as a campaign medium, it will likely be as a *privatized* organizational tool rather than as a more *public* mass medium. Though the Web combines elements of television (images and sound) and print (context and depth) along with the added benefit of interactivity, we are, it seems, misguided in thinking that campaign sites will ever be allocated the resources (both monetary and human) that traditional political advertising currently enjoys. Though there are certainly some candidates who embrace the Web, the fact remains that an estimated seventy-five percent of campaign resources are currently spent on television and radio advertising, while Web sites

are still a minute part of the campaign budget -- less than five percent, according to some industry observers (Connell 2002).

In a related matter, since the bulk of campaign resources are pumped into television advertising, the unsupported hypotheses in this dissertation indicate that, contrary to the opinions of the interviewees in Chapter Four and other cyber-optimists, campaign sites should be viewed as a *complement* to traditional political advertising rather than as an eventual *replacement* for it. This makes sense because, after all, while the primary task of advertising is to persuade (see O'Guinn, Allen and Seminik 2000), campaign Web sites are largely focused on those who are already persuaded (Shaw 2002). Further, it is possible that e-mail is, as one consultant observed, the "killer app" in the Internet arsenal (Connell 2002, C-SPAN). Through applications like the e-mail newsletters and e-mail friends/family features revered by the interviewees, candidates have the power to quickly and inexpensively put critical details in front of citizens, to mobilize activists and supporters, and to provide a continuous dialogue with the campaign. Notes John Horrigan, Senior Research Specialist with the Pew Internet Project, “It’s easy to see how people take advantage of a growing network. Each friend who gets Internet access and each grandmother who sends her first e-mail builds the community of Internet users. The larger the community gets, the more likely it is that people will turn to e-mail to share intimate and crucial communications,” (Pew Charitable Trusts 2002, ¶ 7). Equally as important, e-mail features allow

candidates complete control over the message and a chance to respond directly to questions, concerns, or misinterpretations of site content.

Web sites should also be considered as ancillary to campaigns rather than central to them due to the issue of sensitization. More specifically, while television has largely de-sensitized the masses, the many types of human-interaction (Stromer-Galley 2000) possible on the Internet may have the power to re-sensitize the public, particularly for certain types of candidates. The data from this study indicate that Web sites may be most valuable in well-funded campaigns (e.g. presidential) where citizens are presently de-sensitized to the media, and to the massively under-funded grassroots campaigns (e.g. college elections) at the other end of the spectrum that don't garner much media buzz. The fact that congressional sites fall roughly in the middle of this curve suggests that sites at this level of government, and especially those of less wealthy challenging candidates, are more effective for interpersonal rather than persuasive functions.

THE COLUMBUS CAMPAIGN SITE: A TEMPLATE FOR LEARNING

While the author, the interviewees in Chapter Four, and other past observers (see Larsen and Schneider 2000) have found that candidates generally

seem more comfortable sticking with the tried-and-true ways campaigns have been won in the past rather than in utilizing the campaign tools of the future, there are some notable exceptions. The campaign site of Craig Columbus, Democratic challenger from Arizona, was one of the most informative, creative, and technologically innovative sites in the content analysis. It also provides a fitting illustration for the four broader stories of control, resources, generational differences, and levels of competition that transpired from the study's findings.

Though Columbus, who fought an uphill battle against four-term Republican incumbent J.D. Hayworth, eventually lost his bid for a House seat, his campaign site was well-developed in terms of the five variables examined in this study; it also serves as an example of the relative importance of the issues mentioned in the previous paragraph. The site, now defunct, is described in detail below and an illustration of the homepage is provided toward the end of the section.

Upon reaching the Columbus campaign site, a visitor would likely have first noticed the candidate's knack for creativity. At the top of the page, Columbus provided a link to a section entitled "Get to Know Craig" that offered a detailed biography about the candidate's heritage, education, and Arizona roots. The text draws the reader in immediately:

> The Columbus family history is a story of Irish and Italian immigrants who came to America to live a better life. It's the story of a patriotic, blue-collar family with a deep entrepreneurial streak. It's a testimonial about

> how education can unlock doors closed to prior generations - and how American free enterprise rewards new ideas and hard work.

The young, handsome candidate also displayed a number of warm childhood and family photos on his homepage and throughout the site. Though not referring specifically to the Columbus campaign site, Johnson (1999, p. 711) dubs this style a "soft approach," likening it to the strategy used in a famous political spot from the 1980s:

> ...candidates with kids, jugging and happy and smiling faces, complete with down-home touches such as recipes for mom's chocolate cream pie. Here is the version of Ronald Reagan's 1984 soft glow reelection campaign ads: "Morning in America" comes to the Internet.

In addition to his appealing family-man image, Columbus provided visitors with highlights from his career as a prominent national financial expert, as well as an in-depth discussion of his qualifications for Congress. He also seemed in touch with the issues of the day, mentioning education, the economy, health care, corporate fraud and the environment on his homepage. Endorsements from some of the leading publications in Arizona were included throughout the site, as

well as a detailed map of the district for constituents who were unsure of which area Columbus represented.

Additionally, the Columbus for Congress site was one of the most technologically innovative sites analyzed in the study. The candidate offered visitors the all-important options to volunteer and contribute online either by using a credit card or a printable form, as well as voter registration information and a form through which Arizona residents could register to vote by mail. Just as importantly, Columbus offered visitors a chance to sign up for e-mail updates, and an opportunity to listen to audio files in which he talked about the importance of a strong economy. The Columbus site also featured a "Tell Your Friends" option that allowed supporters to send groups of ten friends and family members at a time the following message:

> I am impressed by what I've seen from Craig Columbus, a candidate for Congress in the 5th District. That's why I am supporting him. I encourage you to check out his website at www.columbusforcongress.com!

In addition to the substantial informational, creative, and technological features provided on the Columbus for Congress site, the candidate was confident enough in his beliefs to let visitors know he represented the Democratic party, describing himself in one section as a "moderate, centrist Democrat who offers

new leadership for the Information Age." He also made his partisan differences clear in a section entitled "Columbus vs. Hayworth," and in another specifically designed for journalists called the "Press Room," where Columbus outlined his views on Arizona's economy and education system. These sorts of information indicate that Columbus read the political climate in Arizona's fifth District and concluded that the voters felt it was time for a change in party leadership.

Illustration 7.1: Homepage of challenging candidate Craig Columbus (D-AZ).

The Columbus for Congress site was different than those of most candidates in the study in that the Arizona challenger lacked the apparent hesitancy of many candidates to accept the Web as a significant campaign medium. For the reasons listed above, it appeared that Columbus used the issues of control, resources, generational differences, and competition uncovered by this cultural study to his advantage in three ways.

First, the fact that Columbus displayed a number of family photographs and, in fact, used a photo of himself with his three-year-old son as the main focal point of his homepage suggests that Columbus applied the same creative strategies to his Web site that are typically used in more traditional campaign image ads. As such, it could be argued that the candidate viewed his Web site as an equally important campaign advertising tool, rather than as an afterthought.

Second, the Columbus site demonstrates the ways in which an under-funded campaign can use the Web to control the flow of important information, organize grassroots support, and get its key messages out to voters. As of the week before the November 2002 election, Columbus had raised only $306,756 while his Republican opponent, "champion fund raiser" J.D. Hayworth, had amassed $1,492,141 (Silverman 2002, ¶ 2). While Columbus couldn't compete in the area of campaign funds, he at least used the Web to level the playing field as much as possible throughout the race, garnering an impressive thirty-six percent share of the final vote in a highly Republican district (Arizona Secretary of State

2002).

It was also obvious that the thirty-five-year old incumbent, labeled in the local Arizona newspaper as "an Information Age kind of guy," " better suited to Silicon Valley than Scottsdale," (Epler 2002, ¶ 18) and "really smart, and a more-than-worthy candidate [than Hayworth]," (Silverman 2002, ¶ 3) was no dinosaur when it came to Web technology. In addition to the innovative features outlined in the previous paragraphs, Columbus took the initiative of sending out audio campaign messages via e-mail -- a voter-outreach technique he claimed had never been used in a political campaign (Epler 2002).

SUMMARY

While Craig Columbus and a few other candidates in the sample provide evidence that headway is being made, it appears that Congressional campaign sites, and particularly those of challenging candidates, are not living up to the high expectations of Web designers, journalists, and other cyber-optimists. Again, there are at least four reasons why candidates may be hesitant to move to online politics: (1) for fear of losing *control* of the messages they send, (2) to avoid squandering precious *resources*, or because of an unwillingness to embrace technology due to (3) *generational differences*; or (4) a lack of *competition*.

These themes appeared in the interview data from Chapter Four in statements like those found below:

> Opponents are actively using their rivals' sites, and especially their news releases, studying every single word for inconsistencies, etcetera...**Anything you put on a Web site is basically there forever**, even if you change it. You want to be very careful. Don't hurt the campaign because you feel like there's something you have to put on there. I5
>
> Open-ended communication tools, such as bulletin boards and chat rooms, provide an **opportunity for your opponents to take over your site**. I3
>
> By and large, **candidates don't devote resources to this**...Most candidates recognize you need to have [a site], but it's still kind of on the periphery. I8
>
> **One candidate told me that he didn't have the money** for a $2,500 Web site because he was going to spend his last $45,000 on a television spot. I6
>
> The **more hotly contested the race is**, the better the sites are likely to be. I3
>
> There is **definitely a generational shift.** The people who get it use the Web very effectively, and use it as a core part of their campaigns. The generation still in charge is still the baby boomers who are not yet knowledgeable of the power of this medium. I2
>
> **I target a lot of freshman Congresspersons** because they tend to be younger, they tend to understand the Internet, and they tend to have staff that understands the Internet. I10

The patterns also appeared in the campaign and legislative sites that were the focus of Chapters Five and Six. A majority of the 263 sites examined in the

content analysis were extremely conservative in the *amount and types of information* they posted, and most shied away from information that could benefit opponents, such as events schedules, financial figures, and press releases. In fact, many politicians neglected to mention even the most basic political issues.

It was also apparent, particularly on the homepages of challenging candidates, that *resources* were an issue of utmost concern when developing a campaign site. While there were many red flags indicating that politicians had chosen to avoid the often high costs associated with hiring a Web design consultant, some of the most common mistakes were using unprofessional photographs and posting overly cluttered homepages. For example, challenger Christine Ferguson (R-RI) displayed two dimly-lit photos of the candidate with her son, most likely taken by a friend or family member (see Illustration 7.2). While Ferguson's images were fine for a personal photo album, they were amateurish and unfit for a campaign Web site. Likewise, challenging candidate Mike Gallagher's (D-FL) headshot, grainy and brownish-hued, portrayed the candidate gazing off to one side as if in the middle of a daydream; Gallagher's headshot was also poorly lit, with a cream-colored background that blended into the candidate's white shirt, washing out all but his blurry face (see Illustration 7.3). Finally, while Congressman John Shimkus (R-IL) should be given credit for providing constituents with ample information, the candidate went overboard in the process by offering eight detailed press releases on his homepage but

neglecting to provide information about himself or his district (see Illustration 7.4).

Illustration 7.2: Photographs from the homepage of Christine Ferguson (R-RI).

Illustration 7.3: Photograph from the homepage of Mike Gallagher (D-FL).

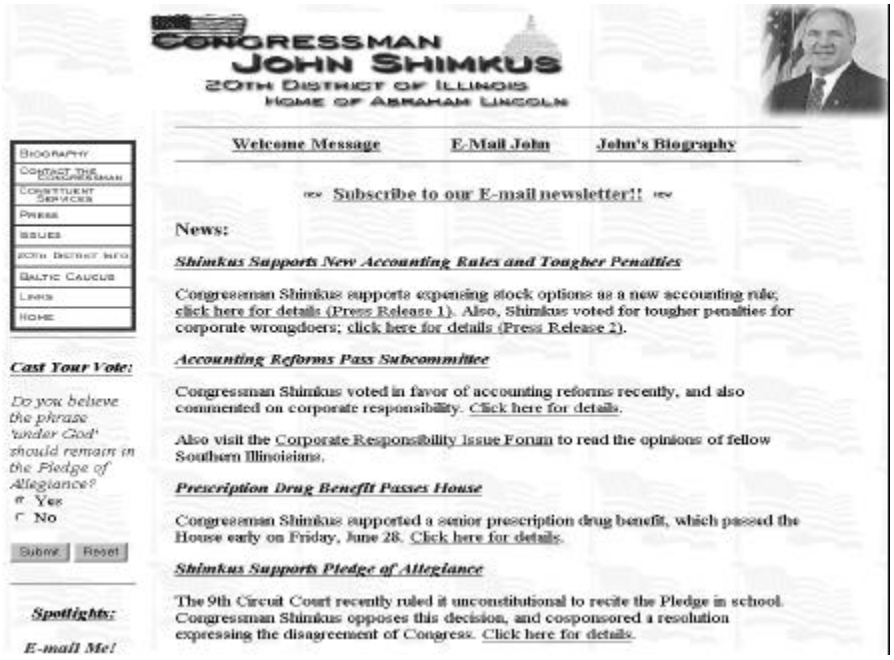


Illustration 7.4: Homepage of Rep. John Shimkus (R-IL).

Lastly, the content analysis revealed reluctance on the part of candidates and legislators to use fairly routine types of online technologies. Whether for *generational*, *competitive*, or other reasons, most sites lacked even the basics such as counters, search engines, and feedback forms. For instance, several candidates like challengers Stephen Engel (D-AL) and David Crawford (R-AL) failed to equip their sites with *even one* of the features viewed by many observers as critical to the success of online campaigns: contribution and volunteer recruitment tools, e-mail newsletters, and e-mail friends/family capabilities. Legislators like

Rod Blagojevich (D-IL), Michael Bilirakis (R-FL), and Barbara Lee (D-CA) also neglected to take advantage of the e-mail newsletter and e-mail friends/family features that could assist them in rallying district supporters, as well as other technologies such as simple polls or surveys that would allow the legislators to gauge public opinion about pressing political issues in their districts.

In a sense, these four concepts describe the roadblocks to politics on the World Wide Web in a richer way than has been previously detailed. Further, the data from this study reveal the types of information (both political and non-political) that candidates are -- and are not -- willing to share, the level of online creativity they aspire to, and the technological innovations they're most comfortable with.

While candidates have always desired control over their messages, it is interesting, but perhaps not surprising, that this sentiment carries over to the Web. Additionally, while research in political science (Abramowitz 2000; Cover 1977), and even in marketing as it pertains to brands (Kardes and Kalyanaram 1992; Szymanski, Troy and Bharadwaj 1995), acknowledges the power of the incumbent advantage, the effects that this bias has on the viability of challengers and the strength of challenging campaigns has perhaps not been fully-documented.

This dissertation found intriguing differences between incumbents and challengers, and many of these differences may be related to the amount of

resources they coveted. Further, campaign logic regarding competitive races suggests that when one candidate raises the bar, the others must follow (see Abramson, Aldrich and Rohde 1995). To date, it seems as if this bar has not been raised in relation to campaign Web sites, with perhaps the exception of those in more tech-savvy areas like San Francisco, Austin, and Washington, D.C. As one interviewee in Chapter Four stated, "In low broadband districts, I keeps the sites very bare bones so that people won't have trouble loading the sites or viewing the contents[39]." Campaign logic also dictates that the great majority of U.S. Representatives are returned to office at the end of the electoral season (see Abramowitz 2000). Perhaps in the future, as was previously mentioned, high-profile campaigns as well as those with very low resources will be most open to Web sites.

Future Research

Although this dissertation establishes a foundation for examining a variety of political campaign sites, it barely scratches the surface of the work that needs to be done in an effort to gain a better understanding of the topic. As such, there are several areas of study that future scholars should explore.

[39] I7.

Multi-methodological projects. First, researchers should continue to examine campaign Web sites both qualitatively and quantitatively since, to date, few academic studies have examined how candidates present themselves online, or how citizens approach, learn from, and evaluate these sites.

Multiple-data sets. Second, scholars should study political sites representing other areas of government -- senatorial or gubernatorial, for instance -- in an attempt to assess how public officials both above and below the House level are utilizing online advertising strategies. Additionally, to supplement the interviews with Web design professionals, researchers could speak with political candidates and/or political Web site users to glean a firsthand view of their thoughts and feelings about these sites.

Various resource levels. Third, differences in resources between challengers and incumbents (who almost always have a significant financial advantage) and their effects on campaign sites should also be more closely scrutinized.

Various theoretical approaches. Fourth, while this dissertation is grounded largely in cultural theory from advertising, communication studies, and political science, it might prove helpful for researchers to draw more from fields such as anthropology and psychology, since researchers in these areas often have a

deeper, or at least a different, understanding of cultural values, beliefs, and meaning. Drawing from linguistic anthropology, for example, a researcher might choose to more closely examine the actual texts (i.e. words) in campaign Web sites to see what they reveal about political candidates and culture. Similarly, a more psychology-minded scholar might choose to focus on how politically-interested visitors actually interact with campaign sites.

Studying Web sites in context. Finally, while touched upon in this project, a direct comparison between political television advertisements and campaign Web sites was not discussed at length; a systematic study contrasting these two types of campaign advertising would be especially insightful.

Limitations

While the findings in this dissertation might not have surfaced had the author explored the topic using other research methods, there were several limitations inherent in using a cultural approach for this project. With regard to the interviews, while thirteen highly qualified individuals were selected for the qualitative portion of the project, a larger sample size might have yielded different results. Additionally, speaking with political Web designers from other

organizations or in other parts of the country might have produced dissimilar findings. On the other hand, however, many of the individuals were identified by a well-respected magazine for campaign professionals, and all were representative of the "elites" in a very small field. Further, the interviewees offered responses that, once analyzed, were quite similar. In other words, because the designers often validated the responses of their peers, this small sample size is tolerated (Dexter 1970).

In reference to the content analysis, while viewing political Web sites through a cultural lens provides an intriguing snapshot of the sites in their infancy, it is also limited by the fact that the content of the Web is constantly changing. Hence, it is probable that the sites examined for this dissertation have changed in both major and minor ways since the time the analysis was undertaken. Second, only the sites of House candidates and legislators were examined; while these sites are beneficial in that they offer high levels of variance, if other races up or down the ballot were analyzed, the results would almost certainly vary from those found in this study. Third, though the campaign sample (N=145) took into account all major party candidates who posted a Web site in the relevant districts, it represents a minimal portion of the total candidate pool, since there were almost one-thousand incumbents and challengers running for open House seats in 2002. Similarly, while there are 436 members in the House of Representatives, only 118 legislative sites were coded for this project, leaving a large number of House sites

unexplored. Finally, there were restrictions on the types of content that could be posted to legislative sites; thus, it is possible that many of the differences found between campaign and legislative sites were dictated by the rules of the House rather than the preferences of legislators.

Conclusion

Elections are significant because they provide Americans the right to choose the political leaders of our country. They are, in fact, at the heart of democracy itself. As Trent and Friedenberg (1995, p. 3) observe, "Whether the election will determine the occupants of two seats in a city council or one chair in the Oval Office of the White House, the political election campaign is an essential element of a democratic system." As we enter the 21st century, the roles the Internet and the World Wide Web will play in that system remain to be seen.

Though the Internet first came to prominence during the presidential campaign of 1996, it was not until 1998 that adequate campaign Web sites began appearing at the statewide level. It was at this point that these sites began to emerge as "more than just a communications tool," (Connell 2002). By 2000, there was evidence that even more progress had been made, as campaigns began

to use the Web for such tasks as fundraising, volunteer solicitation, and mobilization of supporters.

This progress has not gone unnoticed by congressional candidates. In 2002, more House (62%) and Senate (72%) candidates posted Web sites than ever before -- a fifty percent increase since the 2000 elections (Fielding 2002). Moreover, recent data indicates that the public has also begun to warm to the idea of campaigning on the Web. A case in point: over a three-day period leading up to the 2002 election, over 2.75 million politically-interested America Online members used the Web to send instant messages and research political issues and candidates. Additionally, 2.4 million members participated in an AOL online political poll (Fielding 2002). These numbers are significant for two reasons. First, they encompass only the AOL population, leaving out countless millions who tuned in to the Web for election news using other providers. Second, the numbers represent a mid-term race, which history has shown does not typically receive as much attention as those in presidential election years.

As was mentioned in Chapter Two, although Internet adoption rates have been much quicker, the hype surrounding the Internet has not been unlike that which occurred during the introduction of other new media such as radio in the 1920s and television in the 1960s. However, as the Web design consultants interviewed for this study and other observers in politics, journalism, and academics have noted, although Web sites are slowly being integrated into

campaigns, there is still much progress to be made. As Connell (2002 C-SPAN) notes, "Campaigns are doing a better job of going online, but we have a long way to go before we can claim victory that we have used the net in a savvy way."

The hesitancy of candidates to use the Web as a campaign medium despite its relatively low cost and high reach remains puzzling to many. Perhaps Mindich (1998, p. 7) provides some direction:

> Across the broad sweep of time, as speech was joined by writing, followed by the printing press, the telegraph radio, television, and now new computer technologies, practitioners and scholars have struggled to make sense of the changes attendant with each new media system. Often, those who struggled to explicate the new technologies failed to grasp their future implications.

Mindich (p. 7) cites the example of Socrates' resistance to writing, apparent in his statement, "[writing] will create forgetfulness in the learners' souls...they will be hearers of many things and will have learned nothing." Conceivably, the Internet is to many of today's political candidates what writing was to Socrates in the days of ancient Greece.

In the year 2002, it seems that most political candidates are disinclined to view Web sites as a significant campaign advertising medium largely for reasons of control, resources, and generational and competitive differences. Instead, the best practice on the Web currently appears to be internal campaign

communication; that is, communication with activists and supporters through various e-mail features that allow for mobilization, fundraising, and volunteer solicitation, as well as privatized messages accessible only by those within the campaign. This sentiment is accurately reflected in the words of the designer from Chapter Four who found e-mail so important that he encouraged his clients to add an e-mail newsletter sign-up form to every page of their site. As he noted, "Sites are important but email may be even more important...It's a key component of the whole strategy because you keep people close that way. You keep them volunteering, contributing, and reading your site[40]."

Since the story of much of political advertising has centered on control (e.g. targeted media buys, direct mail, etc.), money (e.g. the cost of local and national ad buys), and competition (e.g. the incumbent advantage), it makes sense that campaign Web sites would be considered with these issues in mind as well. It is the author's belief that the cultural approach taken in this study greatly assisted in putting the development of the Web as a political advertising tool into context.

In the future, it appears that Web sites have the chance to play a more important role in campaigns, particularly if the aforementioned four conditions are met. That is, (1) candidates must begin to feel that they have complete control over their online information, (2) candidates must begin to make campaign sites a priority by allocating adequate resources to make their sites more informative,

[40] I4.

more attractive, and more technologically innovative, (3) candidates in both competitive *and* non-competitive races must make campaign Web sites a top priority; and (4) candidates of all ages must become more comfortable with new campaign technologies. All of these factors combined make it more likely that visitors will come to rely on campaign Web sites for much of the political information they currently receive from traditional political advertising.

Though it remains to be seen whether Web sites will actually replace traditional political advertising or simply serve as a complement to it, the findings from this dissertation -- in particular, the lack informative, creative, and technological content on campaign sites -- create a problem for online candidates for at least two reasons. First, it will become increasingly tricky for candidates to maintain their credibility if their communications are seen as old-fashioned or archaic. Second, the relatively slow progress of congressional candidates in providing citizens with online access to political information has encouraged the public to turn to a growing number of online media outlets (e.g. CNN.com; USA Today.com) for news about candidates and elections, thus taking control away from politicians and pushing campaign sites to the rhetorical backburner.

Ansolabehere and Iyengar (as cited in Thurber and Nelson 1995, p. 101) note, "Today, television is the principal intermediary between politicians and voters." This comment begs an important question: What role will the Internet and the World Wide Web play within the changing landscape of political campaigns?

While this question may remain unanswered for quite some time, there is one relative certainty: whatever tack future scholars take in examining the topic of campaign Web sites, the four factors unearthed in this dissertation cannot be discounted or overlooked.

Appendix A: Campaign and Legislative Web Site List

Campaign Web Sites (saved 6/12/02 - 6/13/02; 6/18/02)

State	Name of Site
Alabama	
Jo Bonner	www.jobonner.com
Robert E. Bud Cramer	www.budcramer.org
Stephen Engel	www.engelforhouse.com
J. Don Foster	www.fosterforcongress.com
Mike Rogers	www.mikerogersforcongress.com
Joe Turnham	www.joeturnham.com
Arizona	
Lisa Atkins	www.lisaatkins.com
Scott Bundgaard	www.bundgaard.com
Craig Columbus	www.columbusforcongress.com
Elizabeth Farley	www.farley4congress.com
Jeff Flake	www.flake2002.com
J.D. Hayworth	www.jdhayworth.com
Dick Hensley	www.dickhensley.com
Dusko Jovicic	www.duskojovicic2002.org
John Keegan	www.keegan2002.com
Larry King	www.larryking4cd5.com

Campaign Web Sites (saved 6/12/02 - 6/13/02; 6/18/02)

State	Name of Site
California	
Howard Beeman	www.beemanforcongress.com
Clint Engler	www.englerforcongress.com
Sam Farr	www.friendsoffarr.org
John Graham	www.johngraham4congress.com
Darrell Issa	www.darrellissa.com
Stuart Johnson	www.stujohnson.org
Barbara Lee	www.leeforcongress.org
Joseph Henry Nixon	www.nixonforcongress.org
Doug Ose	www.dougose.com
George Radanovich	www.radanovich.org
Oscar Velasco	www.votevelasco.com
Colorado	
Ramona Martinez	www.ramonamartinez.com
Connecticut	
Jeff Benedict	www.jeffbenedict.com
Joe Courtney	www.courtneyforcongress.org
Stephanie Sanchez	www.voteforsanchez.com
Rob Simmons	www.simmonsforcongress.com
Delaware	
Steve Biener	www.hometown.aol.com\stevebiener
Michael Castle	www.castlecampaign.org
Florida	
Virginia Brown-Waite	www.brown-waitecongress.com
Ander Crenshaw	www.andercrenshaw.com
Mike Gallagher	www.mfghr2002.com
Don Gessner	www.gessner2002.com
Chuck Kalogianis	www.chuckforcongress.com
Gerry Newby	www.gnewby.com
Deborah Pueschel	www.questforamerica.com
Cliff Stearns	www.cliffstearns.net

State	Name of Site
Georgia	
Don Smart	www.smartforcongress.com
Idaho	
Butch Otter	www.otter4idaho.com
Betty Richardson	www.richardsonforcongress.org
Illinois	
Tim Johnson	www.timjohnsonforcongress.com
David Phelps	www.phelps2002.com
Johh Shimkus	www.shimkus.org
Ray Wardingly	www.members.aol.com\raywardingley
Jerry Weller	www.jerryweller.com
Indiana	
Bryan Hartke	www.bryanhartke.com
John Hostettler	www.johnhostettler.com
Mike Sodrel	www.mikesodrel.com
Mark Souder	www.souderforcongress.com
Iowa	
Ann Hutchinson	www.annhutchinson.com
Jim Nussle	www.jimnussle.com
Louisiana	
Rodney Alexander	www.rodneyalexanderforcongress.com
Robert Barham	www.barhamforcongress.com
Lee Fletcher	www.leefletcher.com
Clyde Holloway	www.clydeholloway.com
Maryland	
Oz Bengur	www.ozbengurforcongress.com
Helen Bentley	www.bentleyforcongress.com
Benjamin Cardin	www.cardinforcongress.com
John Jamele	www.jamele2002.com
John Kimble	www.kimbleforcongress.com

Campaign Web Sites (saved 6/12/02 - 6/13/02; 6/18/02)

State	Name of Site
Michigan	
Vernon Ehlers	www.ehlers.org
Kate Lynnes	www.katelynnesforcongress.com
Mike Rogers	www.rogers4congress.com
Mike Simpson	www.simpsonforuscongress.com
Bart Stupak	www.stupak4congress.org
Minnesota	
Clyde Billington	www.billingtonforcongress.com
Bob Lemen	www.lemen2002.org
James Oberstar	www.oberstar.org
Collin Peterson	www.petersonforcongress.com
Janet Robert	www.janetrobertforcongress.com
Missouri	
Todd Akin	www.akin.org
Dick Gephardt	www.dickgephardt2002.com
Nebraska	
Lee Terry	www.leeterry.com
New Hampshire	
Wayne Barrows	www.barrows2002.com
Bob Bevill	www.bevill.com
Jeb Bradley	www.jebforcongress.com
Martha Fuller Clark	www.clarkforcongress.com
Gary Hoffman	www.hoffmanforhouse.com
Sean Mahoney	www.mahoneyforcongress.com
John Stephen	www.stephenforcongress.com
Fran Wendelboe	www.franforcongress.com
New Jersey	
Michael Ferguson	www.fergusonforcongress.com

Campaign Web Sites (saved 6/12/02 - 6/13/02; 6/18/02)

State	Name of Site
New York	
Tim Bishop	www.bishopforcongress2002.com
Sherwood Boehlert	www.boehlert.com
Felicia Gross	www.feliciagross.com
Steve Israel	www.israelforcongress.com
Warren Redlich	www.wredlich.com
North Carolina	
David Crawford	www.crawfordforcongress.org
Ohio	
David Hobson	www.hobsonforcongress.com
Dennis Kucinich	www.kucinich.net
Rob Portman	www.robportman.org
Charles Sanders	www.charleswsanders.org
Oklahoma	
Doug Dodd	www.dougdodd.com
Ernest Istook	www.istook.com
Oregon	
Earl Blumenauer	www.earlblumenauer.com
Peter DeFazio	www.defazioforcongress.org
Pennsylvania	
Bill Choby	www.billchoby.org
John Murtha	www.murtha.org
Edward O'Brien	www.obrienforcongress.com
Rhode Island	
Mike Battles	www.battlesforcongress.com
Christine Ferguson	www.christyforcongress.com
Dave Rogers	www.daverogers.org
South Carolina	
John Spratt	www.johnsprattforcongress.com

Campaign Web Sites (saved 6/12/02 - 6/13/02; 6/18/02)

State	Name of Site
Tennessee	
John Arriola	www.arriolaforcongress.com
Janice Bowling	www.bowlingforcongress.org
Jim Cooper	www.jimcooperforcongress.com
Chris Cornett	www.cornettforcongress.com
Adam Cox	www.coxforcongress2002.org
Lincoln Davis	www.lincolndavis.com
Mike Greene	www.mikegreeneforcongress.com
Fran Marcum	www.franmarcum.com
Andy Ogles	www.andyogles.com
Gayle Ray	www.gayleray.com
Zach Wamp	www.wampcongress.com
Texas	
Felix Alvarado	www.alvarado4congress2002.com
Chris Bell	www.chrisbellforcongress.com
Mike Burgess	www.doctorinthehouse.info
Tom Delay	www.tomdelay.com
Lloyd Doggett	www.doggettforcongress.com
Sam Johnson	www.samjohnsonforcongress.com
Paul LeBon	www.lebon4us.com
Manny Molera	www.moleraforcongress.com
Tom Reiser	www.tomreiserforcongress.com
Tim Riley	www.rileyforcongress.com
Vermont	
Bill Meub	www.meubforcongress.com
Bernie Sanders	www.bernie.org
Virginia	
Rick Boucher	www.boucherforcongress.com
Jo Ann Davis	www.joanndavis.com
Jay Katzen	www.jaykatzen.com

Campaign Web Sites (saved 6/12/02 - 6/13/02; 6/18/02)

State	Name of Site
Washington	
Sarah Casada	www.sarahcasada.com
Jay Inslee	www.inslee4congress.com
Joe Marine	www.electjoemarine.com
West Virginia	
Shelley Moore Capito	www.capito2000.com
Jim Humphreys	www.jimhumphreysforcongress.com
Wisconsin	
Mark Green	www.votemarkgreen.com
Dale Moore	www.dalemoore.org
Paul Ryan	www.ryanforcongress.com
James Sensenbrenner	www.sensenbrenner.org
Scott Stillwell	www.spunkets.com

Legislator Web Sites (saved 7/23/02)

State	Name of Site
Alabama	
Sonny Callahan	www.house.gov\callahan
Bud Cramer	www.house.gov\cramer
Bob Riley	www.house.gov\riley
Arizona	
J.D. Hayworth	www.house.gov\hayworth
Jim Kolbe	www.house.gov\kolbe
Ed Pastor	www.house.gov\pastor
California	
Joe Baca	www.house.gov\baca
Susan Davis	www.house.gov\susandavis
Anna Eshoo	www-eshoo.house.gov
Sam Farr	www.house.gov\farr
Jane Harman	www.house.gov\harman
Darrell Issa	www.house.gov\issa
Tom Lantos	www.house.gov\lantos
Barbara Lee	www.house.gov\lee
Jerry Lewis	www.house.gov\jerrylewis
Zoe Lofgren	www.zoelofgren.house.gov
Gary Miller	www.house.gov\garymiller
George Miller	www.house.gov\georgemiller
Doug Ose	www.house.gov\ose
Nancy Pelosi	www.house.gov\pelosi
George Radanovich	www.radanovich.house.gov
Lynn Woolsey	www.woolsey.house.gov
Colorado	
Diana DeGette	www.house.gov\degette
Connecticut	
Christopher Shays	www.house.gov\shays
Rob Simmons	www.house.gov\simmons

State	Name of Site
Delaware	
Mike Castle	www.house.gov\castle
Florida	
Mike Bilirakis	www.house.gov\bilirakis
Ander Crenshaw	www.crenshaw.house.gov\crenshaw-web
Alcee Hastings	www.house.gov\alceehastings
Cliff Stearns	www.house.gov\stearns
Karen Thurman	www.house.gov\thurman
Dave Weldon	www.house.gov\weldon
Georgia	
Saxby Chambliss	www.house.gov\chambliss
Jack Kingston	www.house.gov\kingston
Idaho	
Butch Otter	www.house.gov\otter
Illinois	
Rod Blagojevich	www.house.gov\blagojevich
Bobby Rush	www.house.gov\rush
John Shimkus	www.house.gov\shimkus
Jerry Weller	www.house.gov\weller
Indiana	
Baron Hill	www.house.gov\baronhill
John Hostettler	www.house.gov\hostettler
Tim Roemer	www.house.gov\roemer
Iowa	
Jim Leach	www.house.gov\leach
Kansas	
Jerry Moran	www.house.gov\moranks01
Jim Ryun	www.ryun.house.gov
Todd Tiahrt	www.house.gov\tiahrt

State	Name of Site
Louisiana	
Jim McCrery	www.house.gov\mccrery
Massachusetts	
Barney Frank	www.house.gov\frank
Maryland	
Ben Cardin	www.house.gov\cardin
Albert Wynn	www.wynn.house.gov
Michigan	
John Conyers	www.house.gov\conyers
Vernon Ehlers	www.house.gov\ehlers
Pete Hoekstra	www.house.gov\hoekstra
Mike Rogers	www.house.gov\mikerogers
Nick Smith	www.house.gov\nicksmith
Minnesota	
Bill Luther	www.house.gov\luther
Betty McCollum	www.house.gov\mccollum
Jim Oberstar	wwwa.house.gov\oberstar
Collin Peterson	wwwa.house.gov\collinpeterson
Martin Sabo	www.house.gov\sabo
Mississippi	
Bennie Thompson	www.house.gov\thompson
Roger Wicker	www.house.gov\wicker
Missouri	
Todd Akin	www.akin.house.gov
Jo Ann Emerson	www.house.gov\emerson
Dick Gephardt	www.dickgephardt.house.gov
Nebraska	
Lee Terry	www.leeterry.house.gov
New Hampshire	
John Sununu	www.house.gov\sununu

State	Name of Site
New Jersey	
Mike Ferguson	www.house.gov\ferguson
New York	
Sherwood Boehlert	www.house.gov\boehlert
Felix Grucci	www.house.gov\grucci
Steve Israel	www.house.gov\israel
Michael McNulty	www.house.gov\mcnulty
Jerrold Nadler	www.house.gov\nadler
Jose Serrano	www.house.gov\serrano
North Carolina	
Richard Burr	www.house.gov\burr
Ohio	
Dave Hobson	www.house.gov\hobson
Dennis Kucinich	www.house.gov\kucinich
Michael Oxley	www.house.gov\oxley
Rob Portman	www.house.gov\portman
Deborah Pryce	www.house.gov\pryce
Oklahoma	
Ernest Istook	www.house.gov\istook
John Sullivan	www.sullivan.house.gov
Oregon	
Peter DeFazio	www.house.gov\defazio
Pennsylvania	
John Murtha	www.house.gov\murtha
Joe Pitts	www.house.gov\pitts
John Toomey	www.house.gov\toomey
Rhode Island	
Patrick Kennedy	www.house.gov\patrick kennedy
South Carolina	
John Spratt	www.house.gov\spratt

Legislator Web Sites (saved 7/23/02)

State	Name of Site
Tennessee	
Bob Clement	www.clement.house.gov
Harold Ford	www.house.gov/ford
Bart Gordon	www.house.gov\gordon
Van Hilleary	www.house.gov\hilleary
Zach Wamp	www.house.gov\wamp
Texas	
Dick Armey	www.armey.house.gov
Joe Barton	www.house.gov\barton
Ken Bentsen	www.house.gov/bentsen
Tom DeLay	www.tomdelay.house.gov
Gene Green	www.house.gov\green
Sam Johnson	www.samjohnson.house.gov
Lamar Smith	www.lamarsmith.house.gov
Vermont	
Bernie Sanders	www.bernie.house.gov
Virginia	
Jo Ann Davis	www.house.gov\joanndavis
Rick Boucher	www.house.gov\boucher
Washington	
Brian Baird	www.house.gov\baird
Jay Inslee	www.house.gov\inslee
Adam Smith	www.house.gov\adam smith
West Virginia	www.house.gov\inslee
Shelley Moore Capito	www.house.gov\capito

Legislator Web Sites (saved 7/23/02)

State	Name of Site
Wisconsin	
Tom Barrett	www.house.gov\barrett
Mark Green	www.house.gov\markgreen
Ron Kind	www.house.gov\kind
Paul Ryan	www.house.gov\ryan
James Sensenbrenner	www.house.gov\sensenbrenner

Appendix B: Campaign Web Site Coding Sheet 2002

Number_____**Party Affiliation**_____

Year_____**Incumbency**_____

Name_____**Region**_____

State & District_____ **Gender**_____

WEB CHARACTERISTICS

Number of links on Homepage_____
Graphics on Homepage (Y/N)_____
Number of Graphics_____
Photos on Homepage (Y/N)_____
Number of Photos on Homepage_____
Multimedia (Y/N) _____ Type _____

First Five Links:

1._____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

CREATIVE FEATURES

A. CONTENT

Biography_____
Candidate Photos_____
Citizen Photos_____
Contact Information _____
Disclosure of Site Sponsorship____
District Information/Map_____
Endorsements_____
Events Schedule_____
Family Photos_____
Greeting Message from Candidate__
Issues - District_____
Issues - National_____
Issues - State_____
Children's Section_____
Press Releases_____
Number of Press Releases_____
Campaign Staff Information_____
Voting Information_____
Washington D.C. Photos_____
Web Site Designer Name_____

B. INNOVATION

Audio Files_____
Bulletin Board/Chat Room_____
Campaign Advertisements_____
Campaign Merchandise Sold on Site_____
Contribute/Donate_____
Counter_____ Number_____
Downloadable Campaign Materials_____
E-mail Family/Friends about Candidate____
E-Mail Newsletter Updates Sign-Up_____
Webmaster Feedback _____
Online Town Hall Meetings_____
Polls_____
Pop-Up Message_____
Type of Pop-Up Message_____
Privacy Statement_____
Search Engine_____
Site Last Updated_____ Date_____
Surveys_____
Video Files_____
Volunteer Sign-Up_____

PRESENTATION OF SELF:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

CULTURAL FEATURES

Activist/Fringe Candidate_____
Career in Politics_____
Corporate Entrepreneur_____
Dedicated Incumbent _____
Political Newcomer/Outsider_____
Other_____

POLITICAL FEATURES

A. PARTISANSHIP/OPPOSITION

Partisanship_____
Type of Partisanship____
Explain_____
Other_____
Political Opposition_____
Type of Political Opposition ____
Other_____

B. BASIC POLITICAL ISSUES

Children/Family_____
Crime_____
Defense/Military_____
Drugs (Illegal)_____
Economy/Jobs_____
Education_____
Energy/Environment_____
Health Care/Prescription Drugs_____
Immigration_____
Internet/Technology_____
Social Security/Seniors_____
Taxes_____
Terrorism_____
Veterans_____
Welfare_____
Other_____

C. CONTROVERSIAL POLITICAL ISSUES
Controversial/Delicate Political Issues_____
Abortion_____
Capital Punishment_____
Gay/Lesbian_____
Racial Issues/Affirmative Action_____
Religion_____
Other_____

INTERESTING FEATURES/OBSERVATIONS:

_____

_____

_____

Appendix C: Legislative Web Site Coding Sheet 1996-2001

#_____
Member _____
Party _____
If yes, explain_____

WEB CHARACTERISTICS

first link_____
# of links_____
text and graphics yes____ no____
photo _____ If yes, explain_____

Multimedia yes_____ no_____
If yes, explain_____
Interactivity yes_____ no_____

POLITICAL CHARACTERISTICS

Topics:
1=campaign
2=legislation
3=committee membership work
4=ethics/perks/scandal
5=House hearings
6=self as source
7=press release
# of releases_____
8=public opinion

Children's Page yes____ no____

Last Updated Link yes____ no____

Counter yes____ no____

Political Opposition yes____ no____
If yes, explain_____

Privacy Statement yes____ no____

POLITICAL ISSUES:

Economic Issues
1=balanced budget
2=minimum wage
3=tax reform
4=welfare reform
5=jobs
Social Issues
6=education
7=health care
8=social security/Medicare

Group Interests
9=abortion
10=environment
11=foreign policy
12=gay/lesbian issues
13=affirmative action
14=crime and violence
00=other_____
_____

STRUCTURE:

First 10 links:
1._____
2._____
3._____
4._____
5._____
6._____
7._____
8._____
9._____
10._____

Comments:
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Appendix D: Campaign Web Site Codebook 2002

INDEPENDENT VARIABLES

1. NUMBER
All candidates will be listed in alphabetical order and assigned a unique number.

2. YEAR

3. NAME

4. STATE & DISTRICT

5. GENDER
1 = Male
2 = Female

6. PARTY AFFILIATION
1 = Democrat
2 = Republican
3 = Independent

7. INCUMBENCY
1 = Incumbent
2 = Challenger

8. REGION
The region each candidate represents will be recorded. States will be divided into four regions, based on geographic divisions as assigned by the United States Census Bureau (2000).
1 = Northeast
2 = South
3 = Midwest
4 = West

Northeast Region: Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, Massachusetts, Connecticut, Rhode Island, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania

South Region: Maryland, Delaware, West Virginia, Virginia, Kentucky, Tennessee, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Florida, Alabama, Mississippi, Arkansas, Louisiana, Oklahoma, Texas

Midwest Region: North Dakota, South Dakota, Nebraska, Kansas, Missouri, Iowa, Minnesota, Wisconsin, Illinois, Michigan, Indiana, Ohio

West Region: Washington, Idaho, Montana, Wyoming, Oregon, California, Nevada, Utah, Colorado, Arizona, New Mexico, Alaska, Hawaii

9. VOTE RETURN
Each candidate's level of support (i.e. vote percentage) in his/her respective district will be recorded.

10. NUMBER OF LINKS ON HOMEPAGE _____
List first five links (start at top left):
1._____
2._____
3._____
4._____
5._____

FIRST FIVE LINKS
Enter one of the following numbers for the First Five Links on the Homepage -- e.g. if the first link is Biography, enter 2.

Value	Label
1	Biography
2	Campaign Advertisements
3	Campaign Merchandise Store
4	Contact
5	Contribute
6	District Information/Map
7	Downloadable Campaign Materials
8	E-mail Friends/Family about Candidate
9	Endorsements
10	Events Schedule
11	Feedback Form
12	Fun Links
13	Greeting/Welcome
14	Guestbook
15	Issues - District
16	Issues - National
17	Issues - State
18	Children's Section
19	Legislation
20	Newsletter/Updates Sign-up
21	Photos
22	Polls/Surveys
23	Position Paper
24	Press Releases
25	Staff Information
26	Volunteer
27	Voting Registration Information
28	Washington D.C. Photos
97	Missing
98	Other
99	Nothing

11. GRAPHICS ON HOMEPAGE
1 = Yes
2 = No (if no, skip to 13)

12. NUMBER OF GRAPHICS ON HOMEPAGE_____

13. PHOTOS ON HOMEPAGE
1 = Yes
2 = No (if no, skip to 15)

14. NUMBER OF PHOTOS ON HOMEPAGE_____

15. MULTIMEDIA
1 = Yes
2 = No (if no, skip to 17)

16. TYPE OF MULTIMEDIA_____

DEPENDENT VARIABLES

I. CREATIVE FEATURES

A. CONTENT

17. Biography
    1 = Yes
    2 = No
18. Candidate Photos
    1 = Yes
    2 = No
19. Citizen Photos
    1 = Yes
    2 = No
20. Contact Information for Campaign
    1 = Yes
    2 = No
21. Disclosure of Site Sponsorship (e.g. "This site has been paid for by...")
    1 = Yes
    2 = No
22. District Information/Map
    1 = Yes
    2 = No
23. Endorsements
    1 = Yes
    2 = No
24. Events Schedule
    1 = Yes
    2 = No
25. Family Photos
    1 = Yes
    2 = No
26. Greeting Message from Candidate
    1 = Yes
    2 = No
27. Issues - "Current" or "Hot"
    1 = Yes
    2 = No

28. Issues - District
    1 = Yes
    2 = No
29. Issues - National
    1 = Yes
    2 = No
30. Issues - State
    1 = Yes
    2 = No
31. Children's Section
    1 = Yes
    2 = No
32. Press Releases
    1 = Yes
    2 = No (if no, skip to 33)
        Number of Press Releases_____
33. Campaign Staff Information
    1 = Yes
    2 = No
34. Voting Registration Information
    1 = Yes
    2 = No
35. Washington D.C. Photos
    1 = Yes
    2 = No
36. Webmaster/Designer Name
    1 = Yes
    2 = No

B. INNOVATION

37. Audio Files
    1 = Yes
    2 = No
38. Bulletin Board/Chat Room
    1 = Yes
    2 = No
39. Campaign Advertisements
    1 = Yes
    2 = No

40. Campaign Merchandise Sold on Site
    1 = Yes
    2 = No
41. Contribution Capability
    1 = Yes
    2 = No
42. Counter
    1 = Yes
    2 = No
43. Downloadable Campaign Materials
    1 = Yes
    2 = No
44. E-mail Friends/Family about Candidate
    1 = Yes
    2 = No
45. Newsletter/Updates Sign-Up
    1 = Yes
    2 = No
46. Feedback Form
    1 = Yes
    2 = No
47. Online Town Hall Meetings
    1 = Yes
    2 = No
48. Polls
    1 = Yes
    2 = No
49. Pop-Up Message
    1 = Yes
    2 = No
50. Type of Pop-Up Message
    1 = Fundraising Solicitation
    2 = Welcome
    3 = Volunteer
    4 = Other_____
51. Privacy Statement
    1 = Yes
    2 = No
52. Search Engine
    1 = Yes
    2 = No

53. Site Last Updated
    1 = Yes
    2 = No (if no, skip to 54)
        Date_____
54. Surveys
    1 = Yes
    2 = No
55. Video Files
    1 = Yes
    2 = No
56. Volunteer Sign-Up
    1 = Yes
    2 = No

PRESENTATION OF SELF:

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

II. CULTURAL FEATURES

57. Activist/Fringe Candidate
    1 = Yes
    2 = No
58. Career in Politics
    1 = Yes
    2 = No
59. Corporate Entrepreneur
    1 = Yes
    2 = No
60. Dedicated Incumbent
    1 = Yes
    2 = No
61. Political Newcomer/Outsider
    1 = Yes
    2 = No
62. Other_____

III. POLITICAL FEATURES

A. PARTISANSHIP & OPPOSITION

63. Partisanship
    1 = Yes
    2 = No
64. Type of Partisanship
    1 = Photo with Prominent Party Member(s) Explain_____
    2 = Partisan Graphic(s) Explain_____
    3 = Partisan Text(s) Explain_____
    Other_____
65. Political Opposition
    1 = Yes
    2 = No (if no, skip to 67)
66. Type of Political Opposition
    1 = Attack Ads Introducing Opposition
    Explain_____
    2 = Attack Ads Responding to Opposition
    Explain_____
    3 = Press Releases/Text Introducing Opposition
    Explain_____
    4 = Press Releases/Text Responding to Opposition
    Explain_____
    Other_____

B. BASIC POLITICAL ISSUES

67. Children/Family
    1 = Yes
    2 = No
68. Crime
    1 = Yes
    2 = No
69. Defense/Military
    1 = Yes
    2 = No
70. Drugs (Illegal)
    1 = Yes
    2 = No
71. Economy/Jobs
    1 = Yes
    2 = No

72. Education
    1 = Yes
    2 = No
73. Energy/Environment
    1 = Yes
    2 = No
74. Health Care/Prescription Drugs
    1 = Yes
    2 = No
75. Immigration
    1 = Yes
    2 = No
76. Internet/Technology
    1 = Yes
    2 = No
77. Social Security/Seniors
    1 = Yes
    2 = No
78. Taxes
    1 = Yes
    2 = No
79. Terrorism
    1 = Yes
    2 = No
80. Veterans
    1 = Yes
    2 = No
81. Welfare
    1 = Yes
    2 = No
82. Other_____

C. CONTROVERSIAL POLITICAL ISSUES

83. Controversial/Delicate Political Issues
    1 = Yes
    2 = No (if no, skip to Interesting Features/Observations)
83a. Abortion
    1 = Yes
    2 = No

83b. Capital Punishment
1 = Yes
2 = No
83c. Gay/Lesbian
1 = Yes
2 = No
83d. Racial Issues/Affirmative Action
1 = Yes
2 = No
83e. Religion
1 = Yes
2 = No
83f. Other_____

INTERESTING FEATURES/OBSERVATIONS:

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Appendix E: Legislative Web Site Codebook 1996-2001

NUMBER **Number**

- Unique #…we have assigned this number, top of coding sheet.

YEAR **Year**

- Type the year during which the site was posted and coded—e.g. 1996 or 2001

MEMBER **Member**

- Type the Member's Name (up to 100 characters)—e.g. Gary Condit

STATE_DI **State_District**

- Type the State and District—e.g. Condit=CA_18

TIME 1_2 **Time 1 and 2**

- Indicate whether or not the representative appeared in both 1996 and 2001

Value	Label
1	Yes--Rep appeared in 1996 and 2001
2	No---Rep was replaced in 2001

PARTY **Party**

- Enter one of the following #s for Party I.D.—e.g. Condit=Democrat, enter "1"

Value	Label
1	Democrat
2	Republican
3	Independent

PRTY_PAG **"Party Listed on Homepage"**

- Enter one of the following #s for "Party Listed on Homepage"—e.g. Blue Dog Democrat appears on Condit's page=1

Value	Label
1	Yes
2	No

LINK_1 **First Link**

- Enter one of the following #s for the First Link on the Homepage—e.g. Condit's first link is Biography=2

Value	Label
1.00	Welcome
2.00	Biography
3.00	Contact Member
4.00	Committee Assignments/Work
5.00	Legislation Information
6.00	Issues Link
7.00	Photos
8.00	Press Releases
9.00	Government Resources (flag, letters of rec, etc.)
10.00	Visit DC Information
11.00	Map
12.00	Web Links
13.00	About District Concerns
14.00	About State Concerns
15.00	About Local Concerns
16.00	Fun Links (For Fun)
17.00	Position Papers
18.00	Town Hall Meeting Information
19.00	Surveys
20.00	Public Opinion
21.00	Schedule (Member's Schedule)
22.00	U.S. House Site Link
23.00	Constituent Services
24.00	Multimedia
25.00	Speeches
26.00	Educational Materials

27.00	Guestbook
28.00	What's New
29.00	Party Link (including Blue Dog Democrats)
30.00	Kids Link
31.00	Government / Federal Problems
32.00	Member's Washington Office
33.00	House Hearings
34.00	Member's State Office
35.00	Privacy Statement
36.00	Job Opportunities (e.g. Internships, Pages, etc.)
37.00	Member's Voting Record
38.00	Email Update Sign-up
39.00	Staff
40.00	Government Links (e.g. Senate, Library of Congress, etc.)
96.00	Missing
98.00	Other
99.00	Nothing

LINKS_# **Number of Links**

- Type in the Number of Links on the page—e.g. Condit=23

TEXT_GR **Text and Graphics**

- Enter one of the following #s for the appearance of Text and Graphics—e.g. Condit's page featured them=1

Value	Label
1	Yes
2	No

COLOR **Color**

- Enter one of the following #s for the appearance of Color—e.g. Condit's page featured it=1

Value	Label
1	Yes
2	No

PICTURE **Picture**

- Enter one of the following #s for the appearance of a picture(s)—e.g. Condit's page featured them=1

Value	Label
1	Yes
2	No

PICS_# **Number of Pictures**

- Type in the Number of Pictures of the Representative on the page—e.g. Condit=

T_CMPAGN **Topics_Campaign**

- Enter a 1 if the page discussed campaigns, enter a 2 if it did not—e.g. Condit's page did not=2

Value	Label
1	Yes
2	No

T_LEGIS **Topics_Legislation**

- Enter a 1 if the page discussed legislation, enter a 2 if it did not—e.g. Condit's page did =1

Value	Label
1	Yes
2	No

T_CMWORK **Topics_Committee Work**

- Enter a 1 if the page discussed committee work, enter a 2 if it did not—e.g. Condit's page did =1

Value	Label
1	Yes
2	No

T_ETHICS Topics_Ethics

- Enter a 1 if the page discussed ethical concerns, enter a 2 if it did not—e.g. Condit's page did not=2—note, record "email tax hoax" under other

Value	Label
1	Yes
2	No

T_HEARING Topics_House Hearings

- Enter a 1 if the page discussed house hearings, enter a 2 if it did not—e.g. Condit's page did not=2

Value	Label
1	Yes
2	No

T_PRESSR Topics_Press Releases

- Enter a 1 if the page featured press releases, enter a 2 if it did not—e.g. Condit's page did=1

Value	Label
1	Yes
2	No

RELEAS_# Number of Press Releases

- Type in the number of press releases on homepage--e.g. Condit=6

RELEAS_2 Number of Press Releases One Link Down from Homepage

- Type in the number of press releases one link down from homepage--e.g. Condit=25

T_PUBOPN Public Opinion

- Enter a 1 if the page discussed public opinion issues, enter a 2 if it did not—e.g. Condit's page did not=2

Value	Label
1	Yes
2	No

T_OTHER Other

- Type in any other issues—e.g. Condit—record "email tax hoax"

P_BUDGET Pol Issues_Budget

- Enter a 1 if the page discussed the budget, enter a 2 if it did not—e.g. Condit's page did not=2

Value	Label
1	Yes
2	No

P_MNWGE Pol Issues_Minimum Wage

- Enter a 1 if the page discussed the minimum wage, enter a 2 if it did not—e.g. Condit's page did not=2

Value	Label
1	Yes
2	No

P_TAXES Pol Issues_Taxes

- Enter a 1 if the page discussed taxes, enter a 2 if it did not—e.g. Condit's page did =1

Value	Label
1	Yes
2	No

P_WELFAR Pol Issues_Welfare

- Enter a 1 if the page discussed welfare, enter a 2 if it did not—e.g. Condit's page did not=2

Value	Label
1	Yes
2	No

P_JOBS Pol Issues_Jobs

- Enter a 1 if the page discussed jobs, enter a 2 if it did not—e.g. Condit's page did not=2

Value	Label
1	Yes
2	No

P_EDUCAT Pol Issues_Education

- Enter a 1 if the page discussed education, enter a 2 if it did not—e.g. Condit's page did not=2

Value	Label
1	Yes
2	No

P_HLTHCR Pol Issues_Health Care

- Enter a 1 if the page discussed health care, enter a 2 if it did not—e.g. Condit's page did =1

Value	Label
1	Yes
2	No

P_SOCSEC Pol Issues_Social Security

- Enter a 1 if the page discussed social security, enter a 2 if it did not—e.g. Condit's page did not=2

Value	Label
1	Yes
2	No

P_ABORT Pol Issues_Abortion

- Enter a 1 if the page discussed abortion, enter a 2 if it did not—e.g. Condit's page did not=2

Value	Label
1	Yes
2	No

P_ENVIRO Pol Issues_Environment

- Enter a 1 if the page discussed the environment, enter a 2 if it did not—e.g. Condit's page did =1

Value	Label
1	Yes
2	No

P_FP Pol Issues_Foreign Policy

- Enter a 1 if the page discussed foreign policy, enter a 2 if it did not—e.g. Condit's page did not=2

Value	Label
1	Yes
2	No

P_GAYISS **Pol Issues_Gay and Lesbian Issues**

- Enter a 1 if the page discussed gay/lesbian issues, enter a 2 if it did not—e.g. Condit's page did not=2

Value	Label
1	Yes
2	No

P_AA **Pol Issues_Affirmative Action**

- Enter a 1 if the page discussed affirmative action, enter a 2 if it did not—e.g. Condit's page did not=2

Value	Label
1	Yes
2	No

P_CRIME **Pol Issues_Crime/Violence**

- Enter a 1 if the page discussed crime/violence, enter a 2 if it did not—e.g. Condit's page did =1

Value	Label
1	Yes
2	No

P_OTHER Pol Issues_Other

- Type in any other issue discussed on the page.

For variables S_1 – S_10, enter one of the following options:

Value	Label
1.00	Welcome
2.00	Biography
3.00	Contact Member
4.00	Committee Assignments/Work
5.00	Legislation Information
6.00	Issues Link
7.00	Photos
8.00	Press Releases
9.00	Government Resources (flag, letters of rec, etc.)
10.00	Visit DC Information
11.00	Map
12.00	Web Links
13.00	About District Concerns
14.00	About State Concerns
15.00	About Local Concerns
16.00	Fun Links (For Fun)
17.00	Position Papers
18.00	Town Hall Meeting Information
19.00	Surveys
20.00	Public Opinion
21.00	Schedule (Member's Schedule)
22.00	U.S. House Site Link
23.00	Constituent Services
24.00	Multimedia
25.00	Speeches
26.00	Educational Materials
27.00	Guestbook
28.00	What's New
29.00	Party Link (including Blue Dog Democrats)
30.00	Kids Link
31.00	Government / Federal Problems
32.00	Member's Washington Office

33.00	House Hearings
34.00	Member's State Office
35.00	Privacy Statement
36.00	Job Opportunities (e.g. Internships, Pages, etc.)
37.00	Member's Voting Record
38.00	Email Update Sign-up
39.00	Staff
40.00	Government Links (e.g. Senate, Library of Congress, etc.)
96.00	Missing
98.00	Other
99.00	Nothing

MLTIMED1 Multi-Media

- Enter a 1 if the page featured multi-media, enter a 2 if it did not—e.g. Condit's page did=1

Value	Label
1	Yes
2	No

MLTIMED2 Multi-Media (Describe)

- Describe any multi-media aspects of the site—e.g., Condit's blue dog democrat barks

INTRACT1 Interactivity

- Enter a 1 if the page featured interactivity, enter a 2 if it did not—e.g. Condit's page did=1

Value	Label
1	Yes
2	No

INTRACT2 Interactivity (Describe)

- Describe any interactivity on the site—e.g. Condit—web search, generic email

RESALL **Resource Allocation (Describe)**

- Describe any resource allocation on the site

SELF **Self-Presentation (Describe)**

- Describe the nature of the self-presentation on the site—e.g. Condit used phrase “key power broker”

DCBEHAV **Description of DC Behavior**

- Describe the description of DC behavior—e.g. Condit makes reference to recent floor proceedings

UPDTELNK **Is There a Last Updated link?**

- Enter a 1 if the page featured a “last updated link,” enter a 2 if it did not—e.g. Condit=1

Value	Label
1	Yes
2	No

UPDATE **Last Updated--Enter date**

- Type in the date of the last update—e.g. Condit=06-04-01

COUNTER **Is There a Counter?**

- Enter a 1 if the page featured a “last updated link,” enter a 2 if it did not—e.g., Condit=1

Value	Label
1	Yes
2	No

COUNT **Last Count--Enter "since" date if available**

- Type in the last count and the date—e.g. Condit=68042 since 07/04/01

KIDS Link for Kids

- Enter a 1 if the site featured a link for kids, enter a 2 if it did not—e.g. Condit=1

Value	Label
1	Yes
2	No

KIDS_2 Description of Kids' Page

- Describe the kids' page—e.g. "Gary's page for Kids" features a wriggling pencil and typing computer with smiley faces

COMMENTS Comments

- Enter in any additional comments

EXAMPLE Example Page

- Enter a 1 if the page is designated an Example Page, enter a 2 if it did not—e.g. Condit=1

Value	Label
1	Yes
2	No

APPENDIX F: Use of Content Analysis in the Journal of Advertising During the Period 1981-1991 (Namjung et al. 1993)

Author(s)	Measure(s) Used	Context
Reid, Soley, & Wimmer (1981)	Percentage Agreement	Replication in Advertising Research
Bush, Hair, & Bush (1983)	Percentage Agreement	Animation in TV Advertising
Macklin & Kolbe (1984)	Percentage Agreement	Sex Role Stereotyping
Woodside & Glenesk (1984)	Percentage Agreement	Thought Processing of Advertising
Lill, Gross, & Peterson (1986)	Chi-Square Test of Homogeneity	Social Responsibility Themes
Soley & Kurzbard (1986)	Not Mentioned	Sex in Advertising
Feasley & Stuart (1987)	Not Calculated at all	Layout and Design
Swayne & Greco (1987)	Percentage Agreement	Role Portrayal of Seniors in TV Ads
Hong, Muderrisoglu, & Zinkhan (1987)	Percentage Agreement & Correlation Coeffficient	Cultural Differences in Advertising Expression
Yale & Gilly (1988)	Scott's Pi & Percentage Agreement	Trends in Advertising Research

Author(s)	Measure(s) Used	Context
Rice & Lu (1988)	Percentage Agreement	Chinese Magazine Advertisements
Shimp, Urbany, & Camlin (1988)	Scott's Pi	Framing and Characterization
Wilkes & Valencia (1989)	Percentage Agreement	Hispanics and Blacks in TV Commercials
Weinberger & Spotts (1989)	Not Mentioned	Humor in US and UK TV Commercials
Laczniak, Muehling, & Grossbart (1989)	Winer's ANOVA	Message Involvement
Laskey, Day, & Crask (1989)	Percentage Agreement & Contingency Coefficient	Typology of Commercial Message Types
Hill (1989)	Percentage Agreement	Voter Responses to Political Ads
James & Vanden-Bergh (1990)	Cohen's Kappa	Information Content Comparison
Tansey, Hyman, & Zinkhan (1990)	Not Mentioned	Cultural Themes in Brazilian & US Auto Advertisements

Author(s)	Measure(s) Used	Context
Ferguson, Kreshel, & Tinkham (1990)	Scott's Pi	Sex Role Portrayals
Muehling, Stoltman, & Grossbart (1990)	Percentage Agreement	Impact of Comparative Advertising
Severn, Belch, & Belch (1990)	Percentage Agreement	Effects of Sexual & Non-Sexual Advertising Appeals

APPENDIX G: Use of Content Analysis in the Journal of Advertising During the Period 1992-2002

Author(s)	Measure(s) Used	Context
Biswas, Olsen, & Carlet (1992)	Percentage Agreement & Scott's Pi	U.S. and French Print Advertising
Graham, Kamins, & Oetomo (1993)	Percentage Agreement	German & Japanese Print Advertising
Carlson, Grove, & Kangun (1993)	Perrault's Pi	Environmental Advertising Claims
Domzal & Kernan (1993)	Percentage Agreement	International Food & Fashion Advertising
Leigh (1994)	Cohen's Kappa	Figures of Speech in Print Ad Headlines
Calcott & Lee (1994)	Percentage Agreement	Animation in Television Ads
Olson (1995)	Perrault's Pi	How U.S. Magazines Portray Advertising
Kilbourne, Banerjee, & Gulas, & Iyer (1995)	Not Mentioned	"Green" Advertising
Murray & Murray (1996)	Percentage Agreement	Music in Advertising

Author(s)	Measure(s) Used	Context
Kolbe & Albanese (1996)	Perrault's Pi	Male Portrayals in Print Advertising
Taylor & Stearn (1997)	Cohen's Kappa & Perrault's Pi	Asian-Americans in Television Advertising
Huhmann & Brotherton (1997)	Rust & Cooil's PRL	Guilt Appeals in Print Advertising
Spotts, Weinberger, & Parsons (1997)	Percentage Agreement	Humor in Print Advertising
Turley & Kelley (1997)	Percentage Agreement & Perrault's Pi	Business-to-Business and Consumer Print Advertising
Ford, Vooli, Honeycutt, & Casey (1998)	Percentage Agreement & Rust & Cooil's PRL	Gender Portrayals In Japanese Print Ads
Browne (1998)	Not Mentioned	Gender Stereotypes in Children's Television Advertising
Alison, Benjamin, Hoerrner, & Roe (1998)	Percentage Agreement	Children's Television Advertising

Author(s)	Measure(s) Used	Context
Cho, Kwon, Gentry, Sunkyn, & Kropp (1999)	Percentage Agreement	Television Ads in the U.S. and Korea
Maynard & Taylor (1999)	Percentage Agreement	Girlish Images in U.S. and Japanese Print Ads
Stevenson & Swain (1999)	Cohen's Kappa & Perrault's Pi	Minorities in Advertising
Al-Olayan & Karande (2000)	Percentage Agreement	Print Ads in the U.S. and Arab World
Spears (2001)	Percentage Agreement	Promotional Offers
Ji & McNeal (2001)	Perrault's Pi	Children's Television Commercials in China and the U.S.
Lin (2001)	Holsti's Coefficient	Cultural Values in U.S. and Chinese Print Ads
Meirick (2002)	Scott's Pi	Negative and Comparative Political Advertising
Phillips & McQuarrie (2002)	Perrault's Pi	Rhetorical Style in Magazine Ads

Appendix H: Major Differences in 2001 and 2002 Legislative Sites

1. Thirty-four of the sites had been graphically redesigned.

2. Twenty-one sites added a “War on Terrorism” Banner linking to a Republican site which provided further information on terrorism.

3. Eighty-seven sites added new issues, but the majority added only one or two. Most of the added topics focused on current cultural issues such as Terrorism, Homeland Security, and Corporate Fraud/Accountability.

Appendix I: Accessibility E-mail to Candidates and Legislators

Email to Candidates

Greetings,

My name is Kristen Wilkerson and I'm a doctoral student from the University of Texas at Austin conducting dissertation research on Congressional Web sites. I was wondering if you would take a couple of minutes to answer the three short questions below; in return, I'll be happy to send you a copy of the study results if you would like. Please know that results of this study will be anonymous and recorded in the aggregate. Your response is very important to me, and I truly appreciate your time.

With Kindest Regards,

Kristen Wilkerson

QUESTIONS

1) Who designs your Web site?

2) Who is responsible for the day-to-day operation of the site?

3) On a scale of 1 to 5 (1=easy; 5=difficult), how easy is it to communicate with voters via e-mail?

Email to Legislator

Greetings,

My name is Kristen Wilkerson and I'm a doctoral student from the University of Texas at Austin conducting dissertation research on Congressional Web sites. I was wondering if you would take a couple of minutes to answer the three short questions below; in return, I'll be happy to send you a copy of the study results if you would like. Please know that results of this study will be anonymous and recorded in the aggregate. Your response is very important to me, and I truly appreciate your time.

With Kindest Regards,

Kristen Wilkerson

QUESTIONS

1) Who designs your Web site?

2) Who is responsible for the day-to-day operation of the site?

3) On a scale of 1 to 5 (1=easy; 5=difficult), how easy is it to communicate with citizens via e-mail?

APPENDIX J: 2001-2002 Expenditures of Senate and House General Election Campaigns (January 1, 2001 - November 25, 2002)

	Number	Receipts
Senate	67	$281,870,092
Democrats	31	$136,196,489
Incumbents	12	$70,613,212
Challengers	13	$29,851,251
Open Seats	6	$35,732,026
Republicans	36	$145,673,603
Incumbents	15	$49,806,425
Challengers	15	$40,004,066
Open Seats	6	$55,863,112

	Number	Receipts
House	798	$537,798,322
Democrats	393	$265,772,497
Incumbents	190	$167,077,664
Challengers	158	$52,001,272
Open Seats	45	$46,693,561
Republicans	405	$272,025,825
Incumbents	199	$188,704,328
Challengers	161	$32,136,163
Open Seats	45	$51,185,334

Total Expenditures

Campaign Expenditures	$819,668,414
Republican Expenditures	$417,699,428
Democratic Expenditures	$401,968,986
Incumbent Expenditures	$476,201,629
Challenger Expenditures	$153,992,752
Open Seat Expenditures	$189,474,033

Incumbent Advantage

Incumbent Advantage - Senate	$50,564,320
Incumbent Advantage - House	$271,644,557
Total Incumbent Advantage	**$322,208,877***

Source: www.fec.gov. Retrieved January 15, 2002.
*This figure demonstrates that incumbents spend more than challengers.

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